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IN THIS ISSUE

We got a number of favorable comments on our first “special computer issue” eight months ago — so here we go again. In general, the response to ‘theme’ issues has been good, you can look for more of them.

Depending on how you count, we have six or nine computer-game items in this issue. That ought to be enough to satisfy most of the people who have a disc-drive where their heart should be. Other features include a story by Timothy Zahn (who is getting to be a regular both here and in Analog), a Triplanetary scenario to go with the story; a strategy article for Ice War, a Traveller piece, and, for the fantasy fans, the Magic Contest winners and Lewis Pulipher’s discourse on traps.

And, as you can see, we managed to keep it at 40 pages again this issue. The advertisers are the ones making it possible — let them know where you read about their products.

Until next month, then.

—Steve Jackson

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Where We’re Going

Been a frustrating month around here. Not that everything has gone wrong—but too many things have gone not-quite-right, I can’t decide whether to scream or just regress into infancy. I think the latter course would be advisable. The writing style is easier, anyway:

See the new issue of *Space Gamer*. It has just come back from the printers. Steve and Forrest are very proud of it. They are reading it. Read, Steve and Forrest, read.

Look, Steve and Forrest, look. There is a column missing from the survey. There is a typo in the contest. Isn’t that funny?

Look at Steve and Forrest beat their heads against the walls. They are wondering why they didn’t study accounting instead. They should know there is no accounting for people like them. Look, look.

See the Postal Service. See the nice trucks and boxes and offices full of bag-gage smasher. Look, look. There goes another package of *Space Gamers* Smash, postman, smash.

Look, look. See the bag of *Space Gamers*? Shall we delay them a month like we usually do? How about two months?

Oh, look. See the pretty ad? The ad is for *Cardboard Heroes*. Steve thanks that we will delay this magazine a month like we usually do. Let’s fool Steve. Steve will appreciate the joke. Let’s get every one of these suckers delivered this week. Then everybody will answer the ad. Fun, fun.

See Denis paint. Paint, Denis, paint. Denis is painting *Cardboard Heroes*. Denis is two weeks behind schedule. Paint, Denis, paint. Paint, Denis, paint! Remember, they have to be perfect. See Steve scream. Aaaaaaaaaah!

Look, look. See Chad and Aaron. Chad and Aaron have a new jacket for Steve. It is white. See the funny jacket. Okay, guys, this has gone far enough. I’m better now, honest. Look, look. Steve is all better. Really...""
GAME MASTER

GAME MASTER exists to answer questions on your favorite games. If you have a rules question or play problem, send it in. Questions to be answered will be chosen on the basis of general interest. They will be first referred to the game publisher or designer. If no response is received, GAME MASTER will offer its own interpretation of the rule. Sorry—no individual replies are possible.

Traveller

As an RPG character-player turned game-referee, I have a few questions concerning GDW's Traveller. Say, for instance, a party of adventurers is exploring an installation. For exploration purposes, how would one determine how far a character could move in one turn? Also, how do you determine the passage of game time? I mean, one turn equals ten minutes of game time, with the average human being able to move 120' in the same time. Wasn't true if Traveller was run on the same basis or not? Could you please help me with this problem?

— Patrick V. Reyes

GDW's Loren Wiseman replies: Is that really the movement rate for D&D? That's FIVE SECONDS PER FOOT! What are they moving through? Chocolate syrup?

In Traveller, turns are 15 seconds long, and a character can move 43 meters in one turn (that's a brisk walk). Running, characters can move twice that. Deductions should be made from this rate according to the type of terrain covered, number of endurance points used up, etc. For 1mm miniature figures, I suggest a scale of 1 inch to three meters.

DragonQuest

DragonQuest design chief David Richele answers:

1. In answer to your question concerning the comparative difficulty of becoming a halfling in DragonQuest, I would point out that while halflings may outnumber dwarves and elves in terms of total population in a DragonQuest world, halflings are not as numerous as dwarves. Dwarven societies, for example, are often very populous. Additionally, halflings are often found in close association with other races, such as elves and dwarves, which can sometimes make them more difficult to distinguish from other races.

2. The Experience Multiple for unarmored combat proficiency is 150. There is a limit of 20 to the Renn achievable with bare hands (i.e. it is treated as a Skill).

3. The Base Chance for a Spell of Invincibility (G-8) is 45%.

4. The entire passage in 48,4 is incorrect. The passage should read as follows: A character unarmored combat proficiency is 150. There is a limit of 20 to the Renn achievable with bare hands (i.e. it is treated as a Skill).

5. The Base Chance for a Spell of Invincibility (G-8) is 45%.

6. The experience multiple for unarmored combat proficiency is 150. There is a limit of 20 to the Renn achievable with bare hands (i.e. it is treated as a Skill).

7. The Base Chance for a Spell of Invincibility (G-8) is 45%.

8. The experience multiple for unarmored combat proficiency is 150. There is a limit of 20 to the Renn achievable with bare hands (i.e. it is treated as a Skill).

9. The Base Chance for a Spell of Invincibility (G-8) is 45%.
The battle had been short and furious, and now the last two enemy starships hovered like vultures just outside of blaster range. His fingers resting lightly on the control keys, John Davis had the eerie feeling that they were watching him, waiting for him to lower his guard before launching that final lethal attack. But he knew better than to be lulled, and even as he watched the blips began to move.

Inexperienced warriors usually wasted power by firing as soon as the targets were within range. John resisted that temptation and instead waited until the blips had committed themselves to definite attack trajectories. The first took a simple hyperbolic course, and John got it before it came within fifty thousand kilometers. The second's path was trickier, though, and John wasted two shots before realizing it was a logarithmic spiral. After that, calculating an intercept course was easy, and a single torpedo did the trick.

Leaning back in his chair, John stared at the empty screen with a sense of frustration. It had been too easy. Again.

Parker, the red-haired kid at the next terminal, glanced up and misinterpreted John's expression. "Smatter, Davis! They caught you?"

"Don't be silly." Tapping a key, John watched as the computer printed his score.

Parker whistled. "Eighteen ships blasted in a minute and a half. And with only twenty-two shots and a third of your fuel. Boy, how gloomy do you look when you lose something?"

"You weren't paying attention yesterday, were you?"

"Yesterday? You mean - aw, you didn't bomb another chem test, did you?"

"'Fraid so. You wouldn't want me to ruin my streak, would you?"

Parker shook his head. "I've never seen anyone as smart as you who has so much trouble with tests. How come?"

"I don't know," John shrugged, uncomfortable with the subject. "I freeze up whenever I'm going to be graded on something, I suppose. I've been like that since elementary school."

"Well, cheer up and look on the bright side. Computer games still aren't a required course."

"Very funny," John scowled at the screen. "They might as well be, though. It's getting to be as boring as math class. This is supposed to be one of the hardest games on the machine and I've already beaten it eight times."

"Running out of challenges, huh? Well, let's see. Have you tried Cluster War?"

"Yes. Also Deep Probe, Alien Survival, and Invasion. I can beat all of them practically blindfolded. I've even won Suicide Attack five times."

Parker shook his head in rueful admiration. "It's people like you that discourage the rest of us. I haven't even beaten Suicide Attack. Ah, I know - how about the new one on Index Four called Blockade?"

John frowned. "Never heard of it. Index Four, you say?"

Parker nodded. "I haven't tried it myself yet, but I hear it's one of those games where you wish you had a tree handy to bang your head against. Have fun. He
turned back to his own game.

"Thanks," John busied himself at the keyboard for a few moments, and soon the screen began to fill up with words.

**Blockade: A Game Of Escape And Survival**

You are trapped on a world of the double star Leix. A fleet of enemy fighters lies in orbit around the two stars, out of range of ground-based defenses. You must elude enemy attacks and reach the edge of the screen in order to win.

It sounded mildly interesting. John typed for the rules and read them with growing excitement. Everything had been set up with an eye toward realism. Stellar masses, distances, and revolution speeds were carefully defined; ship capabilities in speed, weaponry, and defense were spelled out in detail. Even the drag effects of the stellar atmospheres had been included.

Altogether, the rules and control options took up six pages, and John took a few minutes after he finished reading to review them in his mind. Calling up the "game board," he studied the layout for a moment. His starting point, the rules said, was a planet of the smaller star, Leix B. That star's red giant companion, Leix A, sat a few inches away on the screen, its atmosphere indicated by a hazy ring surrounding it. The enemy fighters were nowhere to be seen. More as an experiment than anything else, John launched a ship into a simple hyperbolic course.

Out of nowhere a ship appeared, moving on an intercept course. A dot moved between the blips, and John's ship flashed and vanished. The fighter turned back and disappeared.

Frowning, John launched another ship and another, and another. No matter what course was used, one or more fighters always appeared and successfully intercepted the escaping craft. But where were they coming from? Or was that randomized?

He finally got it on the tenth shot. "Aha!" he muttered in triumph.

Parker looked up. "Win it already?"

"Hardly. I've figured out where these fighters are based. They're coming from the two Lagrangian points of the double star."

"I gather that's good?"

"At least I know where to watch for them. I still think it's cheating to let them vanish instead of going back to their nests, though."

Parker watched in silence as John launched another ill-fated ship. "Maybe the fighters aren't disappearing," he sug-

broke off his explanation at the look on her face. "'Cmon, Sandy, I really am sorry. I got some homework done early and just stayed here to play a couple of games. Time just got away from me, that's all."

"It always does, John," she sighed, "and you always say you're sorry. But you never really are."

John felt his face getting red. "That's not fair," he complained. "You're making out like I'm some sort of liar."

"No, not a liar. An addict." Sandy pointed to the terminal. "You use that silly lump of hardware exactly as if it was a drug. Without your daily fix you can't face the real world."

"For gosh sakes, Sandy --"

"I like you a lot, John. You're intelligent, and if you put half the time into your studies that you waste on these games there's no telling how far you could go. But this obsession of yours drives me crazy. You're always cutting classes or skipping homework assignments to come here to this -- this hiding place of yours. Why, John? What are you afraid of?"

His first impulse was to deflect the question, but he resisted that urge. She was right; this had happened far too often, and the least he could do was to offer her an explanation. If he could find one.

"It's not that I'm afraid of anything, exactly," he began slowly, still marshaling his thoughts. "It's more a matter of -- well, look, the world is full of problems these days, problems that don't have any answers. I could beat my head against them forever and not accomplish anything. But with one of these games I can solve a problem, solve it completely. Do you understand?"

"Not really. Life is full of little problems, too; ones that aren't any bigger than that computer gives you. You could be solving those instead of wasting your time and energy in this fantasy world of yours."

"Suppose I could? Nobody would lis-
“I didn’t think so. So long, John.”
“I’m really sorry about the movie. I’ll see you tomorrow?”
“Probably.”
She left the room, not looking back. John watched her go, then turned back to his keyboard. Glancing over at Parker, who had studiously ignored the confrontation, he said, “What do you think? Am I addicted to this stuff?”
“You’re not flunking, are you?” the other countered. “This is just a way of relaxing, like handball or something. Everyone needs that.”
“But it’s more than just recreation,” John objected, “It’s—oh, skip it.”
For a minute he stared at the screen, his thoughts a garbled mess. Could Sandy be right? Was he afraid to tackle the problems of the real world? He had always looked down on people who needed to escape into private fantasies—was he now becoming one himself?
Heck with it. Like everything else in life, there were no easy answers to be found. Maybe some day that would change. In the meantime... he had a blockade to run. Hunching forward in his chair, he resumed the game.

It was after three in the afternoon when he finally solved it. A three-stage slingshot effect using both stars—the large one twice—would get him past the fighters every time. “Got it,” he told Parker.
“Really? Let’s see.” Putting his own game on “hold,” Parker watched as John sent another ship along a tortuous path to safety.

ESCAPE FROM LEIX

Scenario for TRIPLANETARY

by Steve Jackson

This scenario for GDW’s Triplanetary is based on the action in “Fantasy World” — not the actual Lexian engagement as much as the game’s process of solving the tactical problem as it was presented. In its basic form, the scenario is balanced against the Imperial player — once the Lexian player can figure out the trick, once a system for escape has been found, the game can be modified with the variants given at the end, making the problem progressively tougher.

Setup: There are two players. The Imperial player (red counters) sets up first, with two corsairs, three orbital bases, and three dummy counters. All counters are placed upside-down, stationary, on or adjacent to any asteroid hexes.
The Lexian player (blue) gets ten packets. Each packet starts the game in orbit around Terra, Luna, Sol, Venus, or Mercury. These starting positions represent various possible spots near the sun. Lex B. To represent the heavy planetary defenses, Sol and each inner planet may attack as an orbital base (strength 16) if an Imperial ship comes in range. Sol and the planets may not be attacked.

Substitute counters as necessary, since the game’s counter mix does not include (for example) ten packets of any color.

Map changes: Mars does not exist at all. Neither do the asteroids (except as Imperial setup markers). Jupiter and its moons exist and have gravity. Sol and the inner planets exist normally for game purposes, though they do not represent separate bodies.

Movement and Detection: All units begin the game undetected. An Imperial unit is detected when it first moves, or when a packet comes within three hexes of it. A packet is detected when it first burns fuel AFTER leaving orbit, or when it comes within 3 hexes of an Imperial ship or base. Dummies do not detect. Once a ship is detected, it stays detected unless (for a packet) it returns to an inner-system orbit, or (for an Imperial ship) a “re-set” is achieved — see below. Detection occurs at the end of movement, but before combat.

Overloads, Refueling, and Repair: Packets may undergo one overload maneuver, and then require minor maintenance. The same is true of Imperial ships in the basic game. Refueling and minor maintenance take place (for packets) in an inner-system orbit only, and (for Imperial ships) at orbital bases, or after “re-set.”

Combat: Imperial corsairs carry one mine each, which may be replaced by rendezvous with an orbital base. Imperial bases are detection stations only, with no combat strength. Packets have a strength of 1 (as printed in the rule book) rather than 2 (as printed on the counters).

Course of the Game: Imperial units begin the game motionless, and may not move until at least one packet is detected. They may not attack, or deliberately move toward, an undetected packet. However, a packet may maneuver to avoid any Imperial unit, detected or not. This will itself cause fuel to be burned, letting the Imperials detect the ship, but can be worthwhile. The game ends when no packets are left on the board.

Reset: If at any time there are no surviving packets on the board outside the five inner-system orbits, the Imperial player may remove all his units from the board, replace any lost dummies, and set his units up again. All units are inverted and motionless, as per the original setup rules. All ships are automatically refueled and given minor maintenance, and corsairs get new mines if needed. All ships are now undetected.

Victory Conditions: The Imperial player seeks to destroy as many packets as possible, his own losses are not important. The Lexian player seeks to get as many ships off the top of the board as possible. To successfully exit, a ship must have at least 5 fuel units (half its original store) left, and may not be disabled. If seven or more packets successfully escape, the Lexian player wins. Six is a tie. Five or fewer is an Imperial win.

Variations: Players will soon discover one or more maneuvers to allow a near-certain Lexian victory. At this point, add the following complications, starting with the first and working up.

A. The Empire gets three corsairs.
B. Imperial ships may perform the overload maneuver as often as they like — though they must still watch their fuel use.
C. Use variations A and B together.
D. Lexian packets must exit with at least SIX fuel units left.
E. Use variations A and D together.
F. Use variations A, B, and D together.
G. The Empire may trade any or all its three corsairs for two corvettes each.
H. B and G together.
I. B, D, and G together!
And so on... Any of the above may be further balanced in favor of the Lexian player by letting packets fight at their printed value of 2 — or in favor of the Empire by turning all the packets into unamed transports.
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Featured Review:

The Warp Factor

by Forrest Johnson

This is the first SF offering from Strategic Simulations, the company which produced the justly-famous Computer Bismarck. TWF might be classified as a Star Trek program, but it is like no Star Trek program you have seen before. In fact, it bears a more-than-suspicious resemblance to Star Fleet Battles. Up to 10 ships can participate in a given combat. There are 12 ship types. Besides Alliance, Klargons, and Remans (read Federation, Klingons and Romulans), you can command an outpost, starbase, Tie-fighter, X-wing (or is it a Viper?), Cylon Raider or the Millennium Falcon. The beautiful illustrations on the reference sheets could have come straight from the various shows and films. There is, however, no mention of any licensing agreement. Presumably, the publisher either has a very good legal staff, or none at all.

At any rate, the game mechanics have a familiar look. Movement is in two dimensions. There are no stars, planets or other sources of gravity to clutter up the screen. Momentum effects are minimal. Each ship has a limited turning rate and ability to accelerate. However, the heaviest dreadnought “can stop on a dime if desired.” (The idea of “stopping” in space is worth a chuckle.)

Each ship has six defensive screens, arranged clockwise. To knock down other ships’ screens, there are phasers, photon torpedoes, disruptors, drones and plasma torpedoes. When the enemy’s shields collapse, you can send over a boarding party via transporter. Only Romulans (oops, I mean “Remans”) have cloaking devices, but anyone can use ECM to fool up the enemy’s sensors.

Each player secretly allocates energy between these functions, then plots movement. The movement routine allows up to 16 separate changes of course. Weapons can fire at any point during movement, or they can be set to fire at a range, or at “last instant.” There is a “set display” routine which allows 11 magnifications of the battle zone, to help you plan strategy.

A considerable range of tactics are possible. The rules mention the J-curve, “the Fly-by,” “Carouselling” and “Threading the Needle.” All are attempts to bring the maximum number of guns to bear at the most opportune moment. Each is a legitimate tactic, and some of them are used by computer-controlled ships in the solo game.

A good bit of memory is apparently devoted to ship strategy. But alas, a machine makes an unimaginative opponent. A given ship uses a given tactic regardless what it is fighting. A “Klargon” cruiser continues to J-curve at 10 megakicks a turn, even though its target is 100 miles away and retreating.

Human opponents are better. The computer does have one advantage — it doesn’t make mistakes. If a human presses the wrong key, that’s that, there is not enough error trapping. To make things worse, the computer sometimes requires a carnage return after an order, and sometimes does not. A player can easily become confused and devours himself past an important subroutine. (Sorry! You don’t get to shoot this turn.)

The situation is not improved by the number of errors on the reference sheets. The computer, as Darth Vader, knows there are no type 2 drones on the Tie-fighter. A human player is left to discover this fact for himself, probably at an embarrassing moment.

At the end of each game, the computer assesses victory. Each ship has a point value ranging from 1 for a fighter to 21 for a starbase. The larger force has a big disadvantage. If you’re much more powerful than your enemy, you literally can’t “win,” even if you blow him away without taking a hit yourself. Luke Skywalker can take on nine dreadnoughts if he chooses, he is certain to be destroyed, but even more certain to win a splendid victory.

Overall, play balance is no better than in Star Fleet Battles. Whoever decided, for example, that three Cylon Radars are equal to a Federation cruiser should try to play it once or twice. Players will have to construct their scenarios without relying on the given point values.

Unfortunately, the creator of Computer Bismarck is not on the credits. This game is SLOW. In using AppleSoft Basic, and every possible programming shortcut, the designer put his own convenience ahead of the user’s. For example, his use of an off-the-shelf character generator means that ships can be displayed in only four positions. (Your course is 45 degrees, but it looks like 90.) The graphics are unexciting. There is no sound and no color. The tactical richness of this game is almost its sole attractive feature.

THE WARP FACTOR should have been named Computer Star Fleet Battles. Judging from the time the machine takes to calculate damage, I suspect the SFB damage tables were simply copied wholesale into memory. One can only wish the programmer had taken a few more liberties with his text.

Still, THE WARP FACTOR is a challenging game. Our machine was kept pretty busy by staffers who wanted to know, for example, how Captain Kirk would do against a swarm of Tie-fighters. It is slow, but it can keep your attention. And it is a good buy for the Star Fleet Battles addict who can’t find an opponent.

THE WARP FACTOR (Strategic Simulations), $39.95. A 48K AppleSoft disk by Paul Murray and Bruce D. Clayton. Box includes 12-page rulebook, 4 reference sheets, floppy disk. One or two players, playing time 1-3 hours. Published 1980.
STRATEGY

Winning at THE WARP FACTOR requires more than a little familiarity with the program and the ships involved. Basically, you must maneuver your ship so that your own weapons will bear on your foes' weakest shields — while ensuring that your own ship passes through few fields of fire. If you must accept fire, you want it to fall on your strongest shields. If you suspect a weak shield will be fired on, you must reinforce it. All well and good...the problem is that shields have different values, your best weapons will usually have only a limited field of fire, and you never have enough power available. The reader is left to develop his own favorite tricks, but these few hints will speed your learning.

(1) Shield support is better than it looks. The rulebook undervalues shield support. Unless you're positive you know which ships will damage the enemy will hit, general support is better than reinforcement.

(2) If you have drones, use one a turn, every turn, starting as soon as the foe is within range. There is no point bonus for saving your drones, and the sooner you kill the enemy, the sooner he quits firing on you. Note that drones do NOT return the velocity of the parent ship — this game has almost no momentum effects.

(3) Faced with multiple enemies, hit one at a time. Don't spread your fire unless you know that you have more than enough power to demolish a single foe. A ship which can absorb 6-point hits indefinitely may be crippled or smashed by a single 9-point blow.

(4) Practice makes perfect. Once you've run the program once or twice and looked at the pretty lights, I recommend some serious practice before you play a live game — or even the computer — for "blood." It's very frustrating to be two hours into a tense game, fighting for your life, and then realize you don't know exactly how your ship will respond to the command you want to give. My recommendation is:

Scenario Zero: Naval Maneuvers. Before a commander takes a new ship out, he must put her through her paces in "naval maneuvers" against a friendly starbase. His weapons have been replaced by training simulators. The starbase will sit there as he maneuvers and fires at it, his bridge computer will let him know what he would have done to the starbase in a real attack. However, the starbase does not return fire, thus, the captain will be able to test his maneuvers, firing orders, and accuracy at his leisure.

To set up this scenario, punch up a two-human game. Take a single ship of your choice, opposing a starbase. Enter your ship commands normally, when the starbase's turn comes, enter "MS / 0 / 16" to abort its turn without action. Thus, you'll have ample opportunity to test your weapons for accuracy and damage at various distances, and to find out exactly what the effective field of fire is for each of your weapons. (Warning: The reference sheets are not 100% accurate.) You can also experiment with the precise effects of some commands. Try "fire at range 100" command at range 20, for instance. You can also punch up various levels of ECM for the Starbase, to see how your hit chances are affected by ECM with other factors remaining stable.

When you've put your ship through a couple of hours of maneuvers, you'll be ready for serious play against the computer or a live opponent. Not only will you be less likely to hit a key at the wrong time (aborting a move and blowing the turn) — you'll know just what your ship can do, and you'll give your orders quickly and efficiently, freeing yourself for tactical intricacy. Good hunting.

— Steve Jackson

SPACE OPERA

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Space Opera consists of two 90+ page books, handy reference sheets, character, ship, and planetary record forms in a box. It is available from Fantasy Games Unlimited Inc., P.O. Box 182, Roslyn, N.Y. 11576 U.S.A. $18.00 postpaid.

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Coming This Month: MARTIGAN BELT
Adventure scenario for use with Space Opera.
Company Report:

Strategic Simulations

We were a couple of wargamers who had tired of waiting for the large game companies to invest in computer game design. Although the home computer market was small, surveys we conducted seemed to show that there were enough gamers with computers to justify starting SSI.

Early on, we realized we had to study each home computer to determine which, if any, was suitable for strategy games. Due to the small number of computer owners in general, we were forced to consider only the PET, TRS-80 and Apple. We had to answer three questions about each machine. First, is it technically possible to produce a complex wargame on the computer? Second, are there enough owners of the system who would consider purchasing our products? Third, how would we reach potential customers with our products? Contrary to the then-current beliefs of major wargame companies, we came to the conclusion that only the Apple offered all of the technical and marketing features which we required. The Apple was the only computer which offered technical advantages (hi-res color graphics, sound, and automatic chaining from one program to another), a large base of 48K disk owners, and a network of retail stores. (Radio Shack stores refused to carry anything but Radio Shack products, while small computer stores generally preferred Apple software since they did not sell TRS-80s.) Why 48K disk products only? We did not want to do a simple game with only 16K. Our experience quickly revealed that a state-of-the-art wargame requires at least 50-100K, and only Apple's chassis gave us this.

You may be wondering why I have spent so much time talking about computers. SSI is a computer game company. The selection of which computer to use was the most important decision we had to make. We would like to produce complex, high-quality games which could be used on any computer, but it is simply impractical. As an experiment, we did produce a TRS-80 version of Computer Bismarck, but we do not plan anything further in that line. It is possible that we will begin converting some of our games to the Atari computer in the next year, but only if Atari sales pick up considerably.

All of us are anxiously awaiting the next breakthrough in home computers, you know, 128K RAM - built in disk drive - built in color monitor all for $1000 to $1500. However, we don't expect this for another 1-3 years. In the meanwhile, we have developed our own disk operating system for the Apple. It will save about 6K of memory, and speed play considerably. The new DOS will be integral to our next releases, Torpedo Fire and thereafter.

Why all the commotion about computers? The answer involves what everyone believes a computer can do for a wargame. A computer can allow limited intelligence. Also, it can allow simultaneous movement, while doing all of the necessary bookkeeping. It can also keep the players somewhat in the dark as to the combat resolution system, taking the edge away from the mathematician wargamer (and eliminating the old 199-100 equals 1-1 syndrome). It can also keep track of step reduction and other paperwork. Possibly most importantly, the computer can provide an opponent when one finds a shortage of human players. These are the key abilities of the computer, that is if it's an IBM 3033, and that is the problem. Most, if not all, home computers cannot handle all of the above.

When we began development of a game, our first consideration is whether the game can be successfully completed within the memory limitations of the computer. Secondly, after our experience with Computer Ambush, we now ask whether the computer can quickly execute its job as referee, or if not, can and should we simplify the game in order to speed it up? There is always a trade-off between realism and speed of execution.

To date, most of our games have featured limited intelligence, blind simultaneous movement, and a computer opponent. Unfortunately, we have discovered that the computer suffers from two major weaknesses. The display cannot give as much information at a glance as a board game is able to do. Also, the process of moving a unit around on a computer screen is much more laborious than moving one on a board. Although we have tried to minimize these problems with commands which allow the player to receive information, and which provide easy movement of units, we have not eliminated the problem. It is possible that with the use of light pens, we could simplify the movement system (just point at the unit on the screen and then point at the location you wish it to move to), but it is unlikely that enough computer owners will spend $200 for the hardware needed. These two problems will undoubtedly continue to be the biggest thorns in the side of strategy computer gaming.

Some of our latest games have attempted to minimize the above mentioned problems. Operation Apocalypse uses a straightforward movement system which allows players to move units on the computer almost as easily as they would on a board. With stacking of units prohibited, the players can gain a lot, if not total, information from a glance at the display. The next step is to use the same game system and to allow stacking Torpedo Fire is visually oriented, with its 3D view from the sub's periscope and multiple magnification maps. Unfortunately, important statistics such as damage received and firepower strength cannot be shown on the map, but must be looked up separately.

Sometime this summer we will release a Napoleonic campaign game which will feature the inability of the army commanders to instantly communicate with units outside of their area of command, as well as the unpredictability of subordinate commanders who are separated from the main army. With limited intelligence, not only tactically, but also strategically, this game will attempt to take advantage of all of the computer's advantages which I discussed above. If it works, we will attempt a similar game on the Civil War.

Although our primary interests are in the realm of historical games, we have just begun to venture into the world of science fiction and fantasy games. We felt that The Warp Factor was a major deviation from other computer sci-fi games, and we hope to design a fantasy game within the next year that will be significantly different from current computer adventures. With our eventual goal being the release of 12 new products every year, we hope to create a product line that will interest all computer gamers.

- Joel Billings
Computers to Go

by Aaron Allston

It's not very conspicuous, this little shop, with windows facing a submarine-sandwich joint on one side and a florist across the street, all a stone's throw from the University of Texas at Austin campus. But Computers to Go may well represent an important development in the personal computer market.

The main order of business here is not selling computers, but selling computer time. For $1/ten minutes, $2.50/half-hour, or $4.50/hour, anyone can walk in to play Rescue at Rigel, update his business records, or enter a dissertation and print it out on the shop's Diablo printer. The business also rents and leases computer systems and supplemental hardware for use outside the shop, and customers can rent-to-buy or lease-to-buy.

"The original philosophy," says Casey Carter, founder/manager of Computers to Go, "was to buy three computers and rent 'em to people. Then the money crunch hit." He chose only one computer—an Apple II system—and gradually built up from there. "We opened May of last year.

"We started to add accessories—software, hardware. As time has gone on, more and more things have happened." The little shop with appropriately polyhedral walls now has nine computers operating on the premises, plus the systems and accessories currently out on rental or lease contracts.

The conversation is interrupted as a pair of college students enters to negotiate for the Diablo for a month. Carter, a man with a lazy grin and a Ph. D. in Science Education, quickly concludes terms for its rental.

The business is expanding. Within the first few weeks of April, a branch business will open in a small shopping mall just up the street, with a manstand of several Ataris, which will probably rent out at $2.50/hour. The main shop does not have a predominant system—Apples, Ataris, PMC-80s, and Intertec Data System Superbrains are pretty evenly scattered about. The branch business will attempt to provide some competition to the area's pinball/electronic game arcades.

"As far as I know," Carter declares of Computers to Go, "it's the first anywhere, We've had people call in from out of state who've heard of us." And what are the chances of others starting up similar businesses?

"I don't think very many people would want to," he laughs. "First of all, ten years of experience is a nice sounding board. Then, there are the long days." The business is open 13 hours a day, 6 days a week, which he says is something of a heresy in the industry. The branch business will have even later working hours.

A delivery man begins bringing in terminals for use with the University computer systems, piling box after box in a growing wall, blocking access to a line of computers. New purchases such as these, plus rising costs in hardware—such as an across-the-board rise in Apple products as of the first of the year—and purchases for the new branch minimize the amount of advertising Carter can afford, but some promotions are apparent. Giveaway "calendars" with each day of the month bearing a money-off coupon are stacked on a table. An upcoming promotion involves frisbees, which are probably not the sort of floppy disks most customers are used to.

Computers to Go is a novelty among the businesses which surround the UT campus. Perhaps the concept will catch on, but it will take time to see. In the meantime, the shop stands cheerily open, with walls cluttered with packages of sale-or-rent software, programming manuals, computer art and T-shirts, the floor littered with a mound of boxed Atari software and occasional pieces of hardware, ready for the customer not yet willing to shell out thousands of dollars for a personal system.

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Computer Gaming Update

by Bruce Webster

It's been over a year and a half now since my first column on computers and gaming. During that time I have written nearly a dozen articles, played many of the top games on the market, had many discussions (either face-to-face or through letters), and generally done a lot of thinking on the subject. The field has changed a lot during that period as well. I think it would be fair to say that close to 90% of the computer game software now on the market (ignoring the "101 BASIC Games" genre) wasn't available back in mid-1979. A few companies have cornered large chunks of the market, while new companies, based around one or two pieces of software, are springing up all the time. Much has changed in a year and a half, and the rate of change shows no signs of slackening off.

The purpose of this column is to stop and take a look at some areas in the field of computer gaming, where it is now, and where it might go in the future. At the same time, I'm going to throw in my own opinions about some of the games, companies, and trends in the market.

Recent Developments

The last few years have seen a veritable flood of gaming software for home computers. At the same time, the level of sophistication has increased dramatically. In the summer of 1979, most of the games I found in the local Computerland were fairly simple arcade-type games, and most of the computers being sold were cassette-based systems with 16K of RAM. Now most of the systems going out of that same store are 32 or 48K systems with at least one floppy disk drive, and most of the games hanging on their waists have also gone up in size, complexity... and price. Phasor Zap and Space Maze have given way to Computer Bismarck and Hellfire Warrior, cassette games have been replaced by diskettes, and average prices have gone from around $12 up to $30, with many games falling in the $40-$60 bracket. In short, computer games are becoming big business, and some distinct categories have developed.

Perhaps the most popular class of computer game currently on the market is the role-playing game. These include such titles as Automated Simulations' Dunjonquest and Starquest series, the various versions of Adventure (Microsoft, Scott Adams, et al), Edu-Ware's Space/Space II, and a host of others. I see two basic reasons for their popularity. First are the same reasons that Traveller, Dungeons & Dragons, and other role-playing games are popular — and I will leave it to the reader to decide just what those reasons are (thus nearly avoiding having to perform that analysis). Second, they give the player an always-ready gamemaster who is available at any hour of the night or day to run a game for his sole benefit.

Curiously enough, two sub-classes have developed among these games. One is centered around the original Adventure game from MIT. This type usually is dialog-centered, and is based around picking up everything in sight in order to solve problems later or to help you get out of the twisty little passages that all look the same. Graphics and combat options are scarce. The other type is best exemplified by Automated Simulations' Dunjonquest/Starquest series. This type is combat-centered, and is based around killing (or running from) every living thing you run into, avoiding traps, and picking up what treasure you can along the way. Graphics are used heavily, and commands are quite limited and deal mostly with combat. Aficionados of each type tend to put down the other. I personally enjoy both, and would like to see the two styles merged.

Video

Video games in arcades have become more sophisticated, and so have the arcade-type games for home computers. These tend to be imitations of the games available in the arcades — Space Invaders and the like — though Atari's Star Raiders is a wonderful exception. And mention of Atari brings another point: the graphics capabilities of most home computers can't match those of arcade units (Atari is the exception again), so the games usually aren't quite as nice. However, if you're an arcade game fan (and I must confess to spending a few quarters now and then in the local mall), these home computer versions can quickly pay for themselves — especially if you charge your friends as well.

A number of simulation games have shown up on the market, though not as many as I would like. Edu-Ware, Inc., has produced the most innovative of those that I've seen, especially TERRORIST (which could be called a role-playing game, except it's nothing like the ones mentioned above). Indeed, Edu-Ware has produced all that I've seen, with the exception of Muse Software's Three Mile Island (another excellent game). This is definitely an area that could use more development.

There are also a number of "conquer/save the universe" games, not to mention the innumerable versions of Star Trek (all disguised to avoid problems with Gene Roddenberry and each other). I have a personal weakness for these types of games (though I have yet to see a Star Trek game I like), and my all-time favorite computer game — Tom Claeuw's Galactic Empires (not to be confused with Douglas Claeuw's Galactic Empire) — falls into this category (see my review in TSG 31).

Along the same line are the many play-by-mail games that are completely moderated by a gamemaster with the help of a computer. Most of these are based on a space exploration/conquest theme, e.g., Universe II, Warp Force One, and the grand-daddy of them all, Starweb. And not only are most of these computer-based, but now Starweb moves can be sent in via a nation-wide timesharing network known as The Source, and rumor has it that Empyrean Challenge will soon be doing the same.

Ironically, there are very few true "computer wargames" Strategic Simulations, Inc., has made the biggest and best effort in this area; unfortunately, their games tend to cost an arm and a leg. Ava-
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Ion Hill has put out some games at the other end of the financial spectrum, but, as the saying goes, you get what you pay for — not much. The lack of development here could be explained by the observation that conventional wargamers aren't as attracted to computers as SF/fantasy gamers. The problem is, I don't know if that's really true, and it doesn't explain why so few SF/fantasy wargames for computers have been developed. The "microgame" format has been well developed for board games — why not for computer games?

Areas for Exploration

While the variety of computer games has been steadily increasing, there are some areas that have not yet been developed, or at least not very well. In some cases this lack of development is understandable, but in others it is very curious.

I am most amazed by the lack of software for gamemasters of role-playing games. It is incredible that, given the growing national popularity of D&D and other such games, no one has come up with marketable software to (1) design dungeons (countries, worlds, solar systems, etc.), (2) perform other random creations and initializations that can take up so much of a gamemaster's time, and (3) actually aid the gamemaster while he/she is moderating a session (rolling dice, determining combat factors, generating random encounters). I mentioned this concept in my very first column, and I've been threatening to do an entire column on the subject ever since. Maybe I'd better follow through. Or perhaps I'll just write the software myself.

Along the same lines, I've seen little mention of programs that are designed to either aid players with a given boardgame or to provide a player with an opponent for said game. There has been occasional mention of game-and programs in SPI publications, and Adrian Petz down in Australia has written and published a game-and program for SPI's *After The Holocaust*, but that's all I've seen along those lines. As for opponent programs, the only mention I've run across has been in letters I've received from TSG readers, half of whom seem to be working on programs to play Ogre.

There is yet another wide-open field: multi-player games. There are a large number of possibilities here. Several people sitting around one computer, two (or more) computers hooked directly up to each other; two (or more) computers communicating via modems, do-it-yourself play-by-phone or play-by-mail games; and so on. *Galactic Empires* is the best example of the first possibility that I know of, handling one to twenty players. None of the other ideas have been commercially developed, as far as I know. Why don't some of the numerous software entrepreneurs work on these types of games, rather than turning out the 37th version of *Adventure* or *Star Trek*?

The Future

The problems I see facing the gaming software market in the future are largely the same as I see facing the entire personal computing software market. Game programs will continue to be expensive, due largely to over-ambitious distributors and programmers who hope to make a quick killing before software pirates distribute their programs free of charge. Software piracy will continue to flourish, aided by new and better copying programs and fueled by rising software prices. If you see a vicious spiral there, welcome to the club. My personal opinion is that we will see no solution to these problems until someone introduces the software equivalent of microgames, i.e., well-designed but inexpensive games. If that approach is combined with the use of components (counters, maps, etc.) that are not easily coped, we could see the same sort of revolution in computer gaming as occurred in boardgaming when *Ogre* hit the market.

The continuing sophistication of personal computers will have an impact on the games being written. As mentioned above, the Atari 800/800 has far and away the best graphics of any personal computer I've seen and will set a new standard for the industry. As mods become more popular, local and national networks will provide new types of game-playing experiences. More games will be written in languages other than Basic, especially now that Apple is licensing a specially modified UCSD Pascal operating system that allows Pascal programs to be booted up and run on 48K Basic systems. Inertia and a tight economy will probably delay any really significant hardware advances, but 1985 should probably see a large number of 16-bit (and maybe 32-bit) personal computers on the market, with increased processor speed and memory expandable to 1 MB (1000K) and up.

If I had to reduce my comments on the current state of computer gaming to one phrase, it would be *caesar empor — let the buyer beware.* There is a lot of half-finished software out on the market, nestled among the better-written stuff, and both types are very expensive. Frankly, my advice to those of you who own your own computers and who want to play well-written games on them is to learn to program well and write most of them yourselves, buying only the ones that you really want to. If you don't feel you can program well, or if you don't have the time, then read the reviews, ask around, try to actually play the game before buying it — and be prepared to spend a lot of money.

Next. Play-by-phone update

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TRS-80 Briefing

A regular reviewer, Jon Mishcon, was asked a while ago to tell the editor about the various models of TRS-80 available. We thought his answer was worth publishing.

In re the TRS models, there are now five major models of the TRS-80. Generally their software is not interchangeable:

**Model I**

**Level I** is a 4K machine's machine. Not many around anymore, and not much software available. Any of its programs cannot be used on any other TRS-80 without a lot of modification.

**Model I Level II** has just been taken off the market (there is a company in California that is producing the PMC computer which uses the EXACT same ROM and RAM so the general line will continue) although Radio Shack is going to continue to produce peripherals and software for this machine. It has sold well over 250,000 and is the single most popular computer EVER sold. Model I Level II refers to the Read Only Memory arrangement. This model TRS-80 may have between 16 to 48K and all sorts of devices added on. It was taken off the market only because it was thought too expensive to modify it to comply with the new FCC regulations.

**Model II** is a fairly expensive business-oriented machine. Its software is not compatible with any other TRS-80 but there is little game software for it.

**Model III** is the "new Model I Level II." It has all the latest improvements and a couple of dodads. The vast majority of Model I Level II software will work on the Model III. Naturally Radio Shack can't tell owners which will and which won't.

**Color Model TRS-80** is the latest TRS and is almost solely designed to challenge APPLE in the game market. The Color TRS is completely incompatible with any other TRS-80. Personally I believe it will fail horribly.

Henceforth, a reference to "TRS-80" on these pages means the Model I Level II or Model III, unless otherwise specified.
DESIGNER’S NOTES

akalabeth
by Lord British

Many games on the market have one of two major flaws. Some have minimal graphics. And those which have decent graphics often run so slo-o-o-o-w that the game value gets lost in the lag time between moves. When I created Akalabeth (and now Ultima), these were the two main problems I had to address.

Before Akalabeth, fantasy computer graphics were fairly primitive. In fact, my inspiration for Akalabeth was a game called Escape, which had low resolution graphics. My objective was to create a game which would show monsters and dungeon corridors in perfect perspective.

I approached the problem from three angles: the artist’s approach (thanks, Mom!), the calculus approach (thanks, Dad!) and the trigonometric approach (thanks, Me!). Fortunately, all the paths led me to a very simple solution. The implementation can get a bit complicated, but an explanation in layman’s language appears below.

Having cleared this hurdle, I started to design the “game.” Fantasy role-playing games generally have elaborate combat systems, with lots of modifiers and look-up tables. A similar approach often crops up in computer games, but the result is so slow that a real-time game is all but impossible.

Though I am a member of the Society for Creative Anachronism, with many a bloodless combat behind me, I thought a simpler approach was necessary. In Akalabeth, all the complexities of hand-to-hand combat are covered by a few, simple algorithms. Purists will not be happy with that, for example, I use “sword” to represent everything from a mighty hand-and-a-half to a springy little epee. But simplifications were unavoidable, given the game speed I hoped to achieve.

Many games which do have nice graphics aren’t worth playing because the programmer concentrated on the graphics and didn’t allow enough variety. Wary of this pitfall, I stocked my dungeons with thieves who stole your weapons, gremkins who ate up your food, traps that dropped you to a lower level, and munics which disguised themselves as chests. An adventurer’s life may be short, but it is certain to be exciting.

Unfortunately, Akalabeth was not perfect (sigh!). Because I did not have a disk drive (everyone has to start at the bottom), I could not include a routine for saving the game. Even when I got a disk drive, there was no memory left to allow a game storing routine.

Having finished Akalabeth (and having learned much from my mistakes), I set out to design the most complete fantasy role-playing game yet written for the computer. All but a few of my most far-fetched goals were reached with Ultima. Ultima is Akalabeth and more. Players have a choice of four races and four professions. Magic has been expanded. Technology has been introduced. A character can eventually buy a time machine or space shuttle, if he survives long enough.

Ultima is written in Basic and machine language. (Akalabeth was primarily Basic.) Basic makes string manipulation easy and is good enough for the text portions of the program. Machine code, of course, runs much faster than Basic and must be used for things like complete hi-res screen updates. By skillfully mixing the languages, a programmer can combine his own convenience with the players’.

Throughout my efforts, I have emphasized realism, trying to give the players a character’s-eye-view of my fantasy worlds. I use one-stroke orders to speed input, I have gone to great lengths to make the graphics as clean and realistic as possible. With this kind of help, it becomes very easy for gamers to make the transition from reality to fantasy.

3-D Graphics

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

One way to draw a dungeon corridor is to use the same technique that an artist uses to draw a row of telephone poles beside a country road. First, use diagonal lines to connect the corners of your screen and draw the horizon through the center (Figure 1).

Place the first pole as shown in Figure 2. I find this looks best at a place a third or a fourth of the distance from the edge to the center.

Next, draw a line from the upper left hand comer of the screen, and through the point where the first telephone pole intersects the horizon. The base of the second pole belongs where the line touches the lower diagonal, as in Figure 3. To establish the base of the third pole, draw a line from the top of the first pole, through the point where the second pole intersects the horizon. You can continue this process as often as necessary, placing the fourth pole, the fifth, and so on (Figure 4).

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THE Beep-Boop Menace

Dear Sir: I have what is probably a fairly common problem. I am addicted to an arcade video game called Battleszone.

It all began innocently when some friends convinced me to ‘try it.’ I was mildly entertained and afterward thought nothing of it. Weeks later, a lonely evening found me in the arcade’s neighborhood and I went in to pass the time. Before I knew what ordeal I had begun, I was destroying enemy tanks, missiles and saucers with such accuracy that I made the day’s top 10 scores and got to put my initials on the screen.

Since then, I have spent hundreds of quarters maintaining my habit, and my only goal for the day is to improve my personal best and stay atop the standings.

Today in my car, I had a flashback. To avoid a last minute, I reversed through oncoming traffic and maneuvered to blast them off the road. It was only when my trigger thumb pressed and nothing happened that I snapped out of it and found myself backed up on a grassy knoll. I swore then and there I would never play again.

But I’ve tried to stop before and always go back. What am I to do?

542,000 and Counting

Dear Sir or Madam:

I don’t know what any of us is going to do. You are one of the countless American citizens who have fallen prey to the greatest threat ever to confront this nation.

For the first time in our history, this country’s corporate establishment is working hand-in-hand with the International Communist Conspiracy. Their goal is nothing less than complete control of the minds of this generation of American youth. And they are winning.

Where are you now when we need you, Ross Perot? Probably playing Space Invaders.

The conspirators had a run at us a couple of decades ago with pinball machines. They were within a trice of gaining the ultimate triumph when a ball-bearing shortage in Russia pulled us back from the brink.

I personally witnessed how close they came. I had a roommate at that time. I would say to him, "Roommate, tonight we have our choice of going to the Playgirls of the Southwest Conference Naked Mayonnaise Wrestling finals, watching the Texas Longhorns play a team of fire-breathing, winged gargoyle from the bowels of hell for the future of the universe, or talking with representatives of the two major political parties, both of which wish to run us for president. What do you think?"

"Let’s go play some pinball," he would say.

Today, it is worse. I have a friend, a professional man of impeccable credentials and of high standing in the community. He tells his wife that he will be late coming home because he has a meeting with organized-crime czars, a heroin-smuggling party and then the continuation of a flaring affair with his secretary.

"I could handle that," his wife says, "but I know that he is really sneaking out to play Space Invaders."

Oh yes, I have seen them. I have seen them in the convenience stores and the theater lobbies and the arcades, then cheeks hollow, their frames gaunt, their eyes glazed and listless, lining up to plug that last quarter into Asteroids.

We have produced a generation that cannot read. Soon, I fear, we will have one which cannot speak; a whole generation of Americans who, when they open their mouths, will come forth with "Beep boop ding ding boop boop beep."

"I’ll tell you, 542,000 and Counting," I can see only one way out of it. Retaliate in kind. Retaliate with force so swift and devastating as to destroy their minds before they can do it to ours. Yes, you know what I am talking about.

I am talking here about dropping video cassettes, produced by NBC and ABC respectively, of Real Russians and That’s the Incredible Ukraine across the length and breadth of your know where.

I know it’s inhuman. I know that it’s despicable, barbaric torture. But it’s us against them and perilous times demand stern measures.

To the battlements, I say. Or, in your language, Beep ding ding boop boop beep!

-Mike Kelley

Kelley is a columnist for The Austin American-Statesman. Reprinted by permission.
This was another popular contest, we got better than fifty entries, many of them very good. Therefore, we've printed as many as space allowed. Entries have been subjected to a minimum of editing, and have been left in the original system(s) for which they were written. GMs or characters wishing to modify spells to other systems should have little difficulty.

The winner was Draper Kaufman, of St. Louis. He sent three items, all ingenious and useful.

The Spell Crystal: Magic item. A prismatic lens of pure rock crystal, usually worn on a headband, helm, or pendant. It can store the memory of any one creation spell and repeat that spell at the wearer's command. Power for its spells must come from the wearer or ST Battery at the normal cost. The Spell Crystal can be used in either of two ways: A) to double a spell as the wearer casts it, creating two gargoyles instead of one, for example, or B) to repeat a spell which the wearer has just cast; thus, having just summoned a gargoyle (or two, as in A), the wearer could use the Crystal to continue summoning one gargoyle per turn until he got bored or ran out of ST. The wearer may fight, move, cast other spells, etc., while the crystal repeats its spell, but once the repetition is stopped, the wearer cannot restart it without successfully casting a new spell. In TFT, the Spell Crystal is a greater magic item which takes 5 weeks to prepare and costs $12,500. The enchantment requires a suitable crystal ($500), 50 ST per day, and supplies worth $1559 per week: one dose of Telepathy potion ($1500), one parrot's tongue ($35), and $24 of common ingredients.

Summon Small Creature: Creation spell. Brings small non-magical creature the wizard specifies to do the wizard's bidding. Neither ST or IQ can be more than 6. Useful creatures include cats, dogs, monkeys, slinkers, ferrets, skunks, otters, hawks, bats, dragonets, snakes, scorpions, and so on. Might be: IQ 8, 1 ST to cast and 1 ST/turn to maintain. Note: If the wizard rarely succeeds (i.e., makes the maximum possible successful roll), the GM may substitute any creature which is similar in some way to the one specified.

Rod of Aaron: Thrown spell. Might be around IQ 13 in TFT. Costs 3 ST to cast, 1 per minute to maintain. Makes limb things stiff while spell is on. Can be used to turn a vine into an impromptu pole or hook, to turn a rope ladder into a rigid one, to make a rowboat out of an appropriately shaped piece of ollcloth, and so on. Object should be laid out in the desired shape first, a single spell can affect only volumes of 2.5 cubic meters or less. The spell can be used on living things - it is much prized by courtesans, for example - but the cost to maintain it is 1 ST per turn if the target is resisting being stiffened. (A magic item based on this spell would cost about $500, should be wand-shaped, and must be touched to the item to be stiffened; the effect lasts as long as contact is maintained, at no ST cost.)

Second place goes to Theodore Miller (Howard Beach, NY) for a remarkably sinister gadget.

Rings of Dorian Gray. When each is worn by a living humanoid any physical change that would normally affect one wearer happens to the other wearer instead. This includes injury, disease, the effects of aging, magically-induced changes (polymorph, clumsiness, invisibility, etc), energy drain, fatigue and rest, hunger and eating, normal or magical healing, and so on.

If one wearer dies the effect stops until someone else wears that ring, and all injury above that necessary to kill this wearer happens to the one being attacked. The rings may only be removed by Remove Curse, Wish, or the death of the wearer.

Player characters may discover either a single ring or a pair. Those finding only one ring from a pair, when the other is worn by a nonplayer character somewhere else, are likely to end up in unusual situations. For example, they may starve in the midst of plenty, since when they eat the wearer feels full and doesn't eat, causing the player character to starve. A player character with one ring may waste through melees without being harmed, but only until the other wearer dies, or ends it by attempting suicide, which will kill the player character instead.

A player character who discovers or produces a pair of rings may avoid the effects of aging by giving the other to a young character, buy a slave to take injuries for him, and so on. A reverse suicide is always possible, however, so that the player had better either make a good deal or hire some trustworthy guards to watch the other wearer.

And there were any number of excellent runners-up.

Place Exchange (alteration, MU spell)
Level: 6
Range: 6" + 1"/level
Duration: Instantaneous
Area of Effect: 2 creatures
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 3 segments
Saving Throw: Special
Explanation/Description: By means of this spell, the mage-user can either change places with another creature or have two other creatures change places with each other. In order to effect this change, both creatures must be within the range of the spell and must have missed their saving throw (willing creatures need not make a saving throw). Creatures of animal or lower intelligence are not allowed a saving throw. This spell could affect undead, but those of more power than a skeleton or zombie get a saving throw at +2. The larger creature must have no more than 3 times the mass of the smaller one.

This spell could be used as a means of escape or as a combat spell. If a mage-user was in combat outside with an ogre, for example, he could have it change places with an eagle that is passing overhead. (In Wizard this spell would be
about I.Q. 16 and cost 2 strength points per meghex between the two parties.)
—George F. Hutchinson III

Soul Clone
Statistics: (For AD&D and Ardun Gilmire)
Level: 8
Range: Touch
Duration: Permanent
Area of Effect: Special
Casting Time: 2 hours
Saving Throw: Special
Mana Cost: 20

Explanation/Description: This spell creates an identical copy of the subject's mind and places it in a vessel where it will be at the command of the caster. The subject must either be willing or unconscious during the entire ceremony. The vessel into which the copy will be placed must have a value of at least 200 Gold Pieces per level of the subject. If the subject is unwilling, no saving throw is made, however, if he is unwilling and unconscious, a saving throw is made. If the throw is within 2 of the required number, the copy is made and implanted in the vessel, but the caster has no control over it. If the throw is 3 or more above the necessary roll, the spell has no effect and the subject becomes conscious; 3 or more below, and it is successful. Once it is in the vessel, it is under the control of the caster. It must answer any questions put to it by the caster (it can speak), but it can say anything it wants to at any time. The copy does not retain any spell ability unless it is subject to above saving throw situation, in which case it has the full spell ability of the original subject and is not under the control of the caster.
—Carl M. Brashear

Clingfire (Evocation, MU spell)
Level: 1
Range: 5′+1′/level
Duration: Special
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 3 segments
Saving Throw: none

Explanation/Description: This spell shoots flaming liquid on one or more creatures in a 10 ft. or more area. The liquid burns longer than oil and cannot be put out by normal means. It can be stored in special enchanted jars for a number of days equal to the level of the spell caster. The damage, if on one creature, is 2-12 the first round, 1-6 the second round, and 1-4 each successive round. The duration is three rounds plus 1 round for every level above 5 (i.e. a 7th level M-U would have 5 rounds of damage 2-12, 1-6, 1-4, 1-4, 1-4). The flame can also be sprayed over the whole 10 ft. area, doing 1-3, 1-2, 1 and 1 more for each successive round of burning (i.e. 7th level, 4 trolls each takes 1-3, 1-2, 1 and 1 [roll separately for each]). When sprayed, each creature over 5 per flask lowers burning time by 1 round (i.e. 4 trolls burn normally, but 6 trolls 1 round, etc.). For every 5 levels, the caster can use 1 oil flask and do 10 sq. ft. area (e.g. a 15 level caster can use three flasks and do 30 sq. ft. area, 15 creatures). Material components for this spell are one or more flasks of oil, and a pinch of sulfur mixed into each flask.
—Mark Oxner

Mapping Potion: Endows user with the ability to sense his location accurately, including his direction and distance from any known reference point, and to remember accurately any path actually taken by the user. Lasts 1 day. In TFT, requires the brains of 20 homing pigeons ($3 each), and five weeks to make. Costs $300.

Ring of Direction: When the wearer concentrates on a place which is personally known to him, the Ring will tingle if the finger it is on is pointed in the direction of that place, the strength of the sensation is inversely proportional to the distance. In addition, the wearer may use that finger to trace (on a map, etc.) an accurate rendering of any path he has taken within the past 48 hours while wearing the ring. May also be set in a headband or helm and worn on the forehead, in which case it tingles when the wearer looks in the right direction and allows him to retrace a path with his eyes while walking or looking at a map. Worn this way, it is a lesser magic item, costs $3000, and takes 3 weeks to make, starting with a gold ring or nugget worth $70 and using 120 ST per day and one dose of Mapping Potion ($300) per week. (Obviously, there could also be a Location Spell — perhaps IQ 11, costing 1 ST per 5 minutes, or something like that.)
—Susan Kaufman

Smoke (C)/IQ-12: Fills one hex with thick, yellow, rolling clouds of noxious smoke, extending some 3 meters into the air. A hex may be smoked while a figure is in it. Figures may move freely through or into smoked hexes. A figure attacking from or through a smoke hex does so at -4DX, any attack into a smoke hex is at -2DX. Any figure who moves into a smoke hex and stops (to attack, to believe, etc.) takes 1 hit of Fatigue damage due to smoke inhalation. Any figure present in a hex when it is first smoked must make a 4-1 die roll vs. DX. Success means...
the figure held his breath and jumped away into an adjacent hex, failure means the figure takes 1 hit of Fatigue damage. Cost for this spell: 2 ST. Note: This spell would probably also be available in 4- and 7-hex forms. I recommend that the 4-hex version be an IQ-14, 4 ST Cost spell and that the 7-hex version be an IQ-16, 6 ST Cost spell.

Zone of Silence (C)/IQ-14: This spell creates a magical barrier to sound. A Zone of Silence will prevent all sound of any type or strength from passing through it, as well as any sound originating in the affected area. It will NOT stop light, Insubstantial beings, or in fact anything physical, just sound. Basic ST cost is 3 to cover an area within 1 hex of the wizard; range can be increased by 1 hex in all directions for each additional ST point the wizard puts into it. Duration of this spell is 3 turns, but this too may be increased (no matter what its range) at a cost of 1 ST per turn. Example: A wizard wishes to cast a Zone of Silence over an area 3 hexes from his own hex for 4 turns. It costs him 3 ST to cast it, plus 2 ST for extending it an additional 2 hexes, plus 1 more ST to hold it an extra turn, for a total ST cost of 6 ST. If the wizard is killed or goes unconscious, the Zone will lift. The Zone CAN be adjusted to affect a part of an area, if the wizard so desires.

If a Zone of Silence only partially restricts the "flow of sound" (that is, if sound can still find some path around the Zone), subtract 1 MH from the distance the sound carries for each hex covered by the Zone.

Force Field (C)/IQ-25: This spell will create a magical barrier that will stop almost anything — spells, physical attacks, illusions, images, summoned beings, etc. It does not affect spells already cast, and will not prevent Demons, astral bodies, or insubstantial figures from crossing it. When a spell is cast on a figure protected by a Force Field, the wizard casting the spell loses the full ST cost for that spell, because it succeeded but was无效. Physical attacks against a figure protected by a Force Field are conducted normally, except that no harm is done to the protected figure (no matter what the die roll is). Costs 20 ST to cast, plus 5 ST per turn it is maintained. Range is 1 hex from the wizard's hex, this may be extended at a cost of 3 ST per hex (not per extra hex of range). This spell may NOT be removed by a Dissolve Enchantment, although of course a Wish will remove it. The catch. (1) It takes 5 undisturbed turns to construct a Force Field; any disturbance of the wizard constructing it costs the wizard 1 ST and forces him to start over. (2) When the first attack is made against the Force Field, the wizard who constructed it must make a 5-die saving roll on IQ; failure means the Force Field is faulty and offers NO protection.

— Steve Woodcock

Bats Out of Hell (C)/IQ-15. TFT: Brings 166 x 100 common bats out of a fiery hole which briefly appears in the floor (or ground). These are not vampire bats and will not attack. Their main usefulness is to provide a diversion or cover a retreat. A dense cloud of several hundred bats emerging from a flaming pit could make it difficult for your opponents to see you; Thus spell is also useful in impressing peasants. Cost: 3 ST. Bats remain for 3 turns at no additional cost. AD&D: (conjuration/suppression, MU spell)

Level: 4
Range: 3"
Duration: 2 rounds +1 round/level
Area of Effect: Special Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 3 segments
Saving Throws: none
Explanation/Description: Upon casting this spell the magic-user causes a seething cloud of 100-600 bats to erupt from a glowing hole in the floor. The bats will occupy a 1" square area and completely block out vision through this area for 1 round per 100 bats. The material components are a wail of bat's blood and a small amount of sulfur.

— Michael J. Vande Bunt

Mobius Ladder: A ladder runs through the center of an open shaft in the center of a room in a dungeon. The shaft extends for three levels, though it seems endless. When someone climbs through the ceiling of the top level he enters the floor of the bottom level on the opposite side of the ladder and vice versa.

— James H. Kelley

Death Disc: This spell generates one or more magical metal discs three feet in diameter, with razor sharp edges. The disc floats 3 feet above the ground and travels at about 60 mph in a straight line in whatever direction the wizard wishes. It can usually cut an armored person in half.

At a higher level spell the discs can be pre-programmed to hover in a still position until triggered by something such as body heat or movement. A set of discs set up this way at one end of a long narrow room makes an effective trap.

The discs are very strong, stronger than any natural metal, and very thin; almost invisible if viewed edge on.

The discs move so fast that they are very hard to dodge, but since they move at a fixed height they'll miss someone who has ducked, or a very short hobbit. Also, a strong fighter with a good shield should be able to block or deflect a disc.

The disc dissolves after it hits a target, or its straight line motion is broken. Maximum range depends on level (D&D) or ST used (TFT).

— Ian Delaney

Contest

Rarely do two sides battle with identical units. A force's machines may be comparable to its foe's (i.e., Tigers and T-34s) — but not identical. So far, for Ogre/GEV, we've seen the Combine's cyberbanks - the Ogres — and the Pan-European light units. No pictures have been published for the Combine's tanks, GEVs, etc. — and all we know about the Pan-European "Fencer" cyberbank is its name and the specs from GEV.

So this month's contest is for the artist. Draw one or all of the "missing" units. Any size and style is acceptable: color, B&W, blueprints... whatever you like. The artist of the best rendition of each unit will receive a $6 issue TSG sub. That makes six possible winners. Fencer, HVY Tank, LT Tank, MSL Tank, Howitzer, and MHWZ. The GEV is excluded from the list; we already have a great design for the Combine's GEV, and you'll see it soon.

Any design that's good enough to win will also be used in preparing the artwork for the new editions of Ogre and GEV. In other words, the final designs will be based on the contest winners. Winners will be chosen on the basis of convincingly first, and artistic merit second.

All entries become the property of TSG. We reserve the right to award fewer prizes if no entries of publishable quality are received in some categories. Entries must be postmarked no later than May 31, 1981.

CORRECTION

Last month's contest contained two typographical errors which affect victory. The enemy infantry units listed at 1813 and 1914 should be at 0813 and 0914, respectively.

If anyone manages a win with the positions listed (or figures out the proper positions and the right answer) we'll award the prizes as promised HOWEVER — we will also award prizes to the first three right answers that mention this correction. Other rules are as explained in TSG 38. Sorry about the error, death togrens!
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Featured Review:

The Morrow Project

by William A. Barton

Rumor has it that a group of Michigan wargamers was busily working away, designing a science fiction role-playing game set in a post-holocaust world in which players were forced to struggle to survive against a hostile environment, latent radioactivity and savage mutants, when they heard of TSR's impending release of Gamma World - a SF role-playing game set in a post-holocaust world in which players were forced to struggle to survive against a hostile environment, latent radioactivity and savage mutants.

Bowing to TSR's professional status, the Michigan gamers, admittedly amateurs, shelved their project. Then they learned Gamma World, with its improbable futuristic weapons (liberally mixed with primitive spears and swords), strange alliances and mutated humans and animals that seemed more refugees from the ADDD Monster Manual than evolutionary developments. So, they took up their pens again. Their long, interrupted labor at last produced THE MORROW PROJECT - what may prove to be the most creditable post-holocaust RPG to date.

Now before anyone out there groans something about Gamma World clones, let me assure you that, beyond the basic premise and a few unavoidable similarities (radiation zones, mutated critters, mutants, etc.), I've found the two games to be quite different. Whereas GW can only be classed as a science fantasy game, THE MORROW PROJECT appears to be truly a science fiction RPG. With a few minor lapses, TMP is firmly based on reasonable scientific extrapolation within its given premises. There are no "black rays" or "protein disruptors," no genetically absurd DNA-freaks, no impossible killer warbots - mostly good ol' hard-core SF with near-future technology.

Realism is central to THE MORROW PROJECT. Its designers have labored to avoid stretching anyone's suspension of disbelief. Hence the inclusion only of existing weapons systems and those not too far beyond present capabilities, the limiting of most mutants to evolutionally feasible survival-oriented changes and the presentation of a believable - if not completely desirable - picture of post-holocaust America.

The game itself begins with WWII, 1989 - or at most the GM's part does. It is his responsibility to map out the various impact sites of the Russian missiles that destroyed the U.S., prior to the actual start of play. TMP is quite detailed on this aspect of the game. More than five full pages are devoted to the war and the various cities and installations, broken down state by state, serving as ground zero for Soviet ICBMs, from MIRVs to biological warheads. Charts are devoted to performance capabilities of each type of missile loaded at Uncle Sam, how much punch the warheads have, how to calculate blast, fire and radiation zones - even whether missiles are land- or sub-based. And if the preprogrammed blueprint for destruction isn't enough for some GM's tastes, the game provides 150 random missiles for the GM to lob wherever his bloodthirsty heart pleases. Remember that little town with the speed trap where they nailed you for $30? Hit it with an SS-N-8! The city where the ex-girlfriend who dumped you lives? Smack an SS-18M1b in his ass and knock him out! (Be the first on your block to be the last on your block!)

Some may wish to dispense with much of the wholesale devastation involved in this portion of the game, getting on with the business of play. It will be necessary, though, for the GM to at least map out impact sites in the general area where his particular team of players will be operating.

The war over, play may begin. You see, player-characters are all members of the Morrow Project, a group of civilian volunteers cryogenically frozen in hidden bases across the country. Their mission? To emerge from their hibernation following the holocaust, locate hidden supply caches and rendezvous at Prime Base so the group can begin the long process of rebuilding civilization. The problem is that Prime Base has been knocked out by another group of survivors, delaying the wake-up signal 150 years. The volunteers wake to a vastly changed - and quite hostile - world. Each team knows only the location of its own supply cache and must survive long enough to locate the remains of Prime Base. Therein lies the meat of the game: survival.

Morrow Teams seem well-equipped to do just that. Looking at the impressive array of equipment available, one may not think that their task so difficult. Teams may find themselves with any of some 34 different firearms ranging from pistols, rifles, submachine guns and shotguns to grenade launchers, mortars, flamethrowers and lasers. The weapons a player gets are apparently determined by the referee (the rules are a bit hazy on this point), who also chooses the type of team the players are to portray - either secon, scientific, MARS (Mobile Assault, Rescue and Strike) or specialty teams - and may be forced to assign individual jobs in case the players' choices fail to make a balanced team. Jobs may range from driver to doctor to KP.

Simulation purists will love the sections on weaponry. Instead of blasters, black ray guns or energy maces, as appear in Gamma World, THE MORROW PROJECT features Stoner carbines, Uzi submachine guns, M-16s and Atchison assault shotguns. Nearly half of the two-page bibliography at the back of the rulebook lists military manuals as reference works, reflecting once again the designers' penchant for realism.

Morrow Project vehicles are well-conceived, too. These range from the lightly armed and armored air scouts, hovercraft and Jeeps to the medium-armed commando vehicles and up to the special heavy vehicles, the Scientific-One mobile laboratory and the MARS-One military vehicle (a separate set of blueprints of the latter is available for anyone so inclined). The MARS-One, I might add, is easily recognizable as the Land Master
from the movie *Damnation Alley*. So that the awesome fire power of the MARS-One (20mm cannons, flame guns, mortars, machine guns, missiles and mounted Claymores) doesn't unbalance the game, however, only four exist — and one of these is at Prime Base, the location of which is unknown to the players. Thus the chance of a team beginning the game with one is slim — unless the GM desires a lot of carnage early on.

Morrow teams are certainly well-equipped. But what of the characters manning the hardware? Character generation in *THE MORROW PROJECT* is relatively routine, the only major difference from other systems being that characteristics are determined by a 4D6-4 roll, resulting in the unusual range of 0 (1) to 20 in each of seven attributes: strength, constitution, dexterity, accuracy, charisma, psi and luck. Strength and constitution determine, among other things, how much damage of various sorts the character can take. Dexterity is a measure of how many actions he can take during a round. Accuracy is the determiner of how well he can hit with a weapon. (There are no skills to learn as in, say, *Traveller* or *Space Opera*.) Charisma is no different than in other RPGs; psi measures psychic potential, and luck is the factor used for saving throws, lucky shots and anything else the GM doesn't want to make an arbitrary decision on. TMP is unusual in that it makes no provision for IQ, the rationale perhaps being that Morrow volunteers by nature possess high intelligence. Secondary characteristics include blood and structure points, which are calculated from strength and constitution. The loss of too many of either of these could spell doom for a character. Percentages of Bps and SpS must be calculated per body part, too, and even blood type must be rolled up in case a transfusion becomes necessary.

Few guidelines are given the GM on getting the characters into play. I suppose the authors assumed most players and GMs would be experienced enough not to need any. Less than a page is devoted to this aspect of the game. Unless the referee is a total novice, however, he shouldn't have much trouble. Players should have no trouble at all. All the rules are well-written, clear and easy to follow. The most complicated part of the game is probably the combat system, and if followed carefully, even this should prove self-explanatory. A character need only roll one less than his accuracy factor on 1D20, taking in account variables such as range, visibility, target size, weapon used or automatic fire. Penetration is then determined by calculating a weapon's penet-

The post-war world of TMP is nearly as well-designed as its combat system. Rules for weather, technology, ruins, NPC reactions and the type of encounters Morrow teams may experience enrich the background settings. Specific encounters are governed by geographical location and may encompass run-ins with groups including bikers, gypsy truckers, new American Indians, the "frozen chosen," left-over American commandos and misplaced Soviet survivors, regular animal encounters, or mutants.

Though some of TMP's encounter groups do reek a bit of *Gamma World*'s cryptic alliances, the designers have avoided the too-easy temptation to go overboard. The few minor excesses that managed to creep in (as when a character gets hit on the head by Bigfoot) can easily be dismissed in the spirit of fun.

*THE MORROW PROJECT* does have its problems. The section on psionics is so sketchy as to be almost worthless. However, few characters will do much with psionics anyway. Several omissions occur in connection with the fauna encounter table. Of several animals listed, from alligators to poisonous insects, only the mammals and the rare or mutatated species are described in game terms at all. And while *THE MORROW PROJECT* is not the typographical monstrosity that *Space Opera* proved to be, more than a few errors can be found on its pages.

Still, overall, I'd have to give *THE MORROW PROJECT* the highest of ratings as a SF role-playing system. If it isn't at least nominated for the Origins awards this year, there just ain't no justice in gameland.

*THE MORROW PROJECT* is designed by Kevin Dockery, Robert Saider and Richard Tucholka and is published by TimeLine, Inc., 31316 Carmody Dr., Warren, Michigan 48092. The rulebook sells for $12; Gamemaster's Shield, $3; Gamemaster's packages of vehicular and personnel basic loads are $7 and $9 respectively, blueprints of the MARS vehicle are $6.

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Rumor Reliability in Traveller

by Steve Winter

One of the most valuable commodities for player-characters in Traveller is information. A false rumor can launch a booby chase halfway across known space, costing thousands of credits and maybe a few lives.

The problem facing the referee is: what kind of rumors and stories has a character heard during his “prior service”? After all, characters spend a considerable amount of time travelling the galaxy before actual play begins, and that time should be taken into account somehow. Secondly, referees need some consistent way of handling informants.

A simple table (see below) can solve this problem. A 2d6 throw, modified by the character’s age and experience (referee’s discretion) determines what he has heard about a subject. Informants are treated exactly like player characters, although some results on the table have different meanings for informants than they have for player-characters.

Rumor Table
(player-characters/informants)

- 2 inaccurate, believed
- 3 inaccurate, repeated
- 4 inaccurate, rumors
- 5 no information/inaccurate, rumors
- 6 partial
- 7 no information/partial
- 8 partial
- 9 no information/partial
- 10 accurate, rumors
- 11 accurate, rumors
- 12 accurate, repeated/second hand
- 13+ accurate, believed/first hand

The results should be interpreted as follows.

inaccurate, believed: The character has heard the same story several times from reliable sources, and he believes it. The story is either misleading or totally false.

inaccurate, repeated: The character has heard the same or similar stories repeated by several sources which may or may not have been reliable. The character doesn’t necessarily believe the stories, but they do carry the weight of repetition. They are misleading or totally false.

inaccurate, rumors: The character has heard of the subject once before, but he has no idea whether the story he heard was true or not. It wasn’t.

no information/inaccurate, rumors: A player character has never before heard of the object, person or phenomenon being investigated. Treat as inaccurate, rumors, for an informant.

partial: This character knows a little, but not much, about the subject. His information may or may not be helpful. There is always a 1/6 chance that it is false.

no information/partial: Player characters have no information, informants have partial information.

accurate, rumors: Same as inaccurate, rumors, except the story was partially or completely true.

accurate, repeated/second hand: For player characters, same as inaccurate, repeated, except the information is true. Informants may claim to have known or spoken with someone who had firsthand knowledge of, or saw computer files on, or otherwise came into direct contact with the subject under investigation.

accurate, believed/firsthand: Same as inaccurate, believed, except the stories were partially or completely true. If this is an informant, he has firsthand experience with the subject.

The referee should not disclose the actual result of the die roll, but determine the result secretly and present information to the players as they would have heard it. These stories can be as colorful or as bland as the referee cares (or is able) to make them, but it’s a good idea to plan a few ahead so the players won’t get suspicious. If the stories aren’t plausible, you won’t fool anybody.

In addition, informants should always get a reaction roll. A source with accurate information could refuse to talk to the players. Even worse, a source with misinformation could be extremely helpful, supplying maps, codes, or charts which are all wrong.

Informants who are extremely hostile or who have refused a bribe may also lie to characters. Consult the following table:

Die modifiers:

| bribe offer rejected | +1 |
| reaction roll = 5 | +1 |
| 4 | +2 |
| 3 | +3 |

source automatically lies on 2d roll of 13+

Since any single informant can be quite unreliable or unhelpful, it is a good idea to let players roll more often for informant encounters than for patrons. Two or three rolls per week, with appropriate DMs for Streetwise, Carousing, Liaison and Administrative Experience, is usually sufficient. The Patron Table works very well for determining the general character of informants.

Although this system was designed for Traveller, there’s no reason why it couldn’t be used in other role-playing systems like D&D or TFT. The table remains the same, only the modifiers need to be changed.
Simple Traps

by Lewis Pulsipher

An experienced role-playing referee can draw on a repertoire of dozens of traps he's devised or experienced over the years, but a novice may find it hard to think of simple, effective traps which don't immediately kill - deathtraps aren't much fun. For the new referee's benefit, here are a few traps one step above the spikes-in-pit variety.

1. An alcove is built above a door in a room or corridor. Guards wait in the alcove, possibly using a listening hole to the outside (funnel shaped at one end so that sound travels mostly one way). When a party of adventurers enters the area, there's a good chance they won't notice the alcove until it's too late to stop the enemy from jumping into the party to attack the vulnerable spell-casters.

2. A ledge extends along one wall over a chasm or pit. When the adventurers are strung out along the wall, secret doors open and enemies with long poles come out, pushing off those nearest and using the poles to lever other adventurers over the edge.

3. At the end of a room lies an altar, statue, jewel, or some other object of interest. When it is touched it activates the opening mechanism for doors near the entrance to the room, and from these issue monsters. Until then, these doors cannot be forced open from the main room.

4. When a given object is touched, a pit opens. The victim falls in and the pit cover shuts. A wall inside the pit pivots and a doppleganger or other imitative shape-changer is rotated into the pit, where it assumes the role of the victim.

5. A large airtight room is occupied by a gelatinous cube or other flammable creature, which will usually be burned by the adventurers. Perhaps the party will feel safer about staying if the creature is in a pit or other area it cannot rapidly move out of. As the burning progresses, lack of oxygen or, more likely, a high concentration of carbon monoxide may overcome adventurers. Heat or pressure change might activate a door seal, as well.

6. In a deserted dungeon area, stairs lead downward from one door then back up to another door some 50 feet from the first and at the same level. Torches burn at intervals on the walls. Anyone descending may be overcome by carbon dioxide or monoxide fumes, produced by the torches, which accumulate at the lowest part of the area.

7. A series of small rooms with one-way doors leads to a treasure. The only way out is through more rooms occupied by gelatinous cubes or other creepy-crawlers. The adventurers will run out of oil (for burning the monsters) before they reach safety.
ICE WAR:

Playing the ESA

by Lawrence Person

Tired of playing the ESA player in Ice War and getting detected before you get to the first line of outposts? Do you get plastered with missiles and arrive at the oilfields with only a fraction of your force? Feel like giving it all up and going home to Moscow and becoming a dentist like your mother told you to do? Then cry no more.

The ESA actually has the advantage. This may be hard to believe for those who have felt despair at the US side's numerous detection devices, missile satellites, and cheap troops via reinforcements. The important thing to remember is to use the advantage of your invisibility to the fullest. A few strategies that have worked for me are:

Old Faithful

This is my standard attack. It is usually effective against the standard (1 missile satellite, 3 outposts) American setup. Initial Units: 1 command sled, 1 sled transport, 2 armored sleds, 8 armored hovercraft, 4 light hovercraft.

Opening Moves: This depends on the initial American setup. The US player will usually set up his outposts on hexes 1116, 1313, and 1611. This makes it necessary to send out your two armored sleds to destroy one outpost. The remainder of your force should be placed in one of the back row hexes. Very back, such as 0503 or 0602. Unless your opponent is a recon satellite freak, your chances of not being detected the first turn are good. It's downhill from there.

Shooting the Gap: The chances are good that at least one of your armored sleds will make it to an outpost and destroy it. Sometimes it gets tough when the US player uses recon sleds and hovercraft to close the gap. In a situation like this, and most of the time otherwise, the best move is to use your remaining sleds and hovercraft to knock out another outpost before taking on combat units. This gives your main force a wider "gap" to shoot through. If you have a situation where you have to deal with sleds and hovercraft as well as recon satellites, you have a chance to pass the outposts undetected only if two or more of them have already been destroyed.

The Attack: If you shoot the gap successfully, you should then have a sizable force at the feet of a group of poorly defended oilfields. If you were detected, you should still have a sizable force almost on top of your objective.

If you are undetected it would be best to split your forces up. Try to get your armored units to hexes 2423, 2323, 2324, and 2222. Thus, combat by-product conversion would become the US player's worst enemy. To keep you from destroying his oilfields he has to risk destroying them himself.

If your forces are detected early, or the US player prefers a large initial force to reinforcements, it becomes necessary to get down to the main battle. The first obstacle should be infantry units on Midway and Cross isles. But if your opponent was stupid enough to put tanks there, just bypass them and go on to the oilfields.

If you face infantry units on the islands, it may be wise to suicide your sled transport in an attack on the units at Cross and put the rest at 2021, 2020, and 2120 to attack Midway.

The two things to remember are: attack oilfield hexes before combat units, and always move onto as many oilfield hexes as possible.
The Hammer and the Sword

This works best against a player with a strong West flank. Initial Units: 1 command sled, 1 sled transport, 6 armored sleds, 8 armored hovercraft.

Opening Moves: Same as Old Faithful.

Shooting the Gap: Same as Old Faithful, with the exception of the situation where there are hovercraft and/or recon sleds in the gap. With this strategy it would be best to reveal yourself just North of the gap and use your armored sleds to take out the opposing units. This will eliminate a force that could harass your rear later, and the sight of your armored sleds may panic your opponent into attempting a total conversion defense.

The Attack: It is best to roll back the west flank with your armored sleds — provided there are no infantry units on the islands. If there are, hit those with your armored sleds. In either case send your armored hovercraft through as soon as possible. It is also best not to leave your sleds on the ice, if at all possible, since combat conversion is a double-edge sword.

The Visible Hammer and the Invisible Dagger

This is for use against the player who goes overboard on the detection equipment. Initial Units: 1 command sled, 1 sled transport carrying 1 tank, 2 armored sleds, 8 armored hovercraft, 3 light hovercraft.

Opening Moves: The entire hovercraft force enters visible near the center of the board, and two armored sleds enter visible at 0510 and 1005, and the command sled, sled transport, and loaded tank, enter visible at 0801. I enjoyed the look on the face of one detection-oriented player when I pulled this one on him! He thought 13 points of his initial setup was worthless. If he had counted the points value of my units, however, he would have found that there were four points worth of units missing and figured it out. Much to his sorrow, he didn’t.

Shooting the Gap: Since most of your units are visible there is no need to shoot the gap. Just make sure all the outposts are destroyed to clear the way for your invisible units.

The Attack: This is where the dagger comes in. While your hovercraft attack as in Old Faithful, your invisible force moves to 2623. There the tank is unloaded. On the next turn your tank and sled transport move to 2423 if it is open, 2524 if it is not. In either case, you then proceed to blow away Deadhorse. If neither of these hexes are open, move to 2523 and convert 2423. In the first case, you get two conversions, as well as causing units from the central battle to be diverted. It also irritates your opponent to the point of chewing the carpet to spring a surprise like this on him.

The Two Missile Sled Offense

This is to throw your opponent a curve after using the other strategies. Initial Units: 1 command sled, 2 missile sleds with four missiles each, 2 armored sleds, 1 hovercraft transport, 6 armored hovercraft.

Opening Moves: Same as in Old Faithful.

Shooting the Gap: Same as Old Faithful, except if detected the missile sleds should fire as soon as they are within range of units on the islands, or the oilfields.

The Attack: Here is where the missile sleds come in. If your units are still undetected, move them to 2019. When your turn comes destroy any units on either island. In the movement phase, move two of your hovercraft each to 2122, 2222, and 2322, your command sled to 2021, and your hovercraft transport to 2321. The missile sleds move to 2121 and 2221. The missiles, with the hovercrafts’ attacks and the fact that they are sitting on two oilfields, should give you the game.
Playtesting is the process of playing a new game design, over and over, in order to spot flaws and improve playability. The importance of playtesting in the production of a finished game design cannot be overstated. Ninety percent of all game defects could have been corrected by satisfactory playtesting. There is no excuse for failure to playtest a design thoroughly before putting it on the market; it indicates either gross ignorance, total egotism, or an absolute lack of interest in giving the gamer his money's worth.

Good playtesting takes time and goes through several stages. But, like research, it is an unavoidable part of the design process. A company or designer that is unwilling to playtest game should be in another line of work—it's that simple.

The techniques used below, with variations, are used at one time or another by every professional designer and company. The advanced stages are often skipped—to the detriment of the final product—but it all starts with the designer's own testing.

**Designer Playtesting**

This is the first stage of playtesting. You've got a basic set of rules (typed legibly), a map, counters, and whatever else you need. Find one friend (or however many it takes for the game) and play it with him. At this stage, you should not rely on the rules. Just tell him how to play. Both of you will be referring to the rules as necessary, but verbal instructions are a big time-saver. At this stage you're testing the system, not the actual text of the rules.

Play through as many times as you can. Whenever a problem crops up, make a note. Unless you run into a really bad glitch, it's best to play out each game with the rules you started with, rather than changing in mid-game. After each game finishes, discuss the notes, and decide what rule changes are necessary for the next game.

In playtesting, you are trying to build a game that meets several criteria:

1. **Balance.** All players should have an equal chance to win. In cases where one side must inevitably be wiped out or driven away, use a "victory point" system to allow a good player to claim victory when his forces managed a good showing in defeat.

2. **Variety.** The game should not be predictable. The longer it takes for the players to optimize their game strategy, the better. If you find that there is only one best way to win, seriously consider changing the rules. Otherwise, your final product may be boring.

3. **Realism.** As a rule, a game becomes less playable as it becomes more realistic. The type of game will determine the amount of realism you can offer players (or tolerate). In general, historical games are expected to be more complex, and therefore more realistic, than small ones. A game that plays quickly and well can get away with less realism than one whose mechanics are cumbersome.

By the playtest stage, you will already have decided how much realism you want; your research and original drafts will have been appropriately detailed. Playtesting will tell you (a) whether your attempts at realism have made the rules too cumbersome, and (b) whether the game results are realistic. An example from my own experience: The counter values, combat rules, etc., of *One Page Bulge* have very little detail—they are not highly "realistic." This was deliberate, for simplicity's sake. My objective was to write simple rules that nevertheless interacted to give a course of play similar to that of the actual Ardennes offensive. Playtesting of the first version proved this was not working out. Therefore, the rules were changed—made more complex, just changed—and tested again. Eventually a game was achieved in which the use of historical strategies will give very nearly historical results. It is therefore reasonable to assume that changed strategies will mirror the "historical" effect of use of those strategies on the battlefield, which is what simulation is all about. And extensive playtesting was necessary to achieve this.

4. **Playability.** This is an omnibus term, taking in many things: rules clarity, speed and ease of play, "interestiness" of each turn and of the game as a whole, and the whole gestalt of the game. The nastiest thing you can say about a game is that it's unplayable. An unplayable game is a failure, pure and simple.

Rules clarity will be checked in the playtesting stage, but start on it now. Any time your first playtesters tell you they can't understand what they've read—listen!

Speed and ease of play will become quickly apparent. If you spend more time looking up rules and doing bookkeeping than you do moving counters—if you have to move lots of counters in very predictable fashion—if information is not centralized and cross-referenced—people are less likely to play the game. As for interest—the harder it is for you to keep your playtesters playing, the less interesting your game is!

A buyer usually expects playability in inverse proportion to realism. Therefore, fantasy and SF are expected to be more playable than historical, and small games will usually be more playable than large ones. Even its designers admit that the historical monster game *Campaign for North Africa* is not meant to be played—just admired for its research—but people buy it anyway!

If you want a successful game, give your buyer at least as much realism as he expects from that "class" of game, and LOTS more playability—or vice versa—and he'll love you.

**Blindtesting**

When you feel that you have the rules the way you want them, and that the game works, you're ready for the second stage of playtest: blindtesting. The essence of blindtesting is that new playtesters are exposed to the game without the benefit of advice from the designer or other experienced players.

The purest form is blindtesting by mail. Send off copies of the rules and all other materials to friends (game clubs, etc.) in other parts of the country. Ask them to play as many times as they can, and to send their results, rule questions, and general reactions back to you.

A modified blindtest can be achieved by recruiting some new local playtesters, handing them the game, and watching... quietly. Simply explain that you want to see whether the rules are good enough for them to figure the game out without help. You can learn more from watching a blindtest session than you can if you work by mail, but it's hard to resist the temptation to explain things, correct illegal play, or brow players out for misreading something you thought was totally clear.

Whichever way you do it, blindtesting is necessary. It will tell you which of your rules are ambiguous or unnecessary. It may also reveal some strategies you hadn't considered, or (if realism is a cri-
choose their own beginning forces, or build reinforcements, according to some kind of "point system," you must test every possible combination of forces they can achieve. Some types of units become disproportionately powerful in numbers - like the "fuzzy-wuzzy" mob attack of the GEVs in the first edition of Ogre. You may control this by making units more expensive, changing their abilities, or just limiting the counters available.

Monster games. If a game takes two full days to play through, you won't get through many playtests. Make the most of the ones you have.

Multiplayer diplomatic games. Such games can be self-balancing, in that the weaker players will combine against the stronger. Just make sure they're not too balanced. Someone needs to win eventually. Cosmic Encounter is an example of a game with a good solution to this problem.

RPG supplements. The bigger the role-playing game, and the more material that is already available for it, the more closely a supplement must be checked. A D&D or Traveller supplement ought to be compatible with literally millions of words of existing game material.

Referred games. If solution of some problems is left to the referee, you should playtest with many different referees to see whether things can get out of hand under some interpretations of the rules.

**Playtest Techniques**

Several techniques are especially valuable, both in designer playtesting and in blindtesting. The designer should try all these things, but blindtesters should be encouraged to try them too. Show them a copy of this article...

**Try the dumb strategies.** This is my biggest single piece of playtest advice; I've been saying it for years, and I'll say it for years more. Just because something seems ridiculous in real life, don't assume it won't work in your game. Try it! If your Civil War simulation constantly lets infantrymen charge uphill and take entrenched positions from equal forces, something is terribly wrong. A good Civil War gamer would never try that at all - so make sure you have a couple of ignorant (or at least patient) playtesters to help you.

**Idiots make good playtesters.** Some of my best playtesters have been people I would never play with for pleasure. They nit-pick at rules, find impossible statements in simple statements, botch setups - a couple of them have been cheaters. If people like this can play a game properly, without driving the others at the table totally up the wall - that game is probably aight.

**Geniuses are helpful, too.** If you know any true experts in the field you're gaming (even if they don't play wargames themselves), ask for their help. They'll be complimented; they'll also be useful. And a hard-core, full-time, professional genius gamer is the best playtester you can get. He'll play for blood, wringing every possible advantage out of the rules. And, unlike the idiot, he'll probably have some very constructive suggestions to make after he's through.

You can never playtest too many times. I think one of the reasons that micro-sized games became popular was that, being small and quick, they had often received more testing than larger games. And, as a rule, more testing means a better game. Not always! I know of a tremendously popular game that was never played by anyone but the designer until it had been published. (It's got problems, but people play it and like it.) Playtest until you drop.

**Keep up with your changes.** When you find an unplayable rule, note it on the rule manuscript. When your manuscript becomes illegible, retypew it... as often as necessary. (Word processors are incredibly useful for this.) If you fail in this, your playtesters will be playing a game that has nothing to do with the rules draft you're working from. Blindtesting will catch this, if you blindtest. But I've read of one SPI project that totally bombed because the designer failed to notice that the playtesters had changed all his rules as they went along. The playtesters had a pretty good game worked out, but the designer never found out what it was... and his version fell flat.

**Playtester Credits**

I hope I've convinced you that playtesters perform an invaluable service, and are necessary aides to a professional designer. As such, they deserve appropriate recognition and compensation. Any playtesters who provide significant input should be listed in the game credits and should receive a free copy of the game. They've earned it.
Capsule Reviews

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APOLCALYPSE (Games Workshop); $20. Designed by Mike Hayet. Boxed, with 3-page rule book, 16" x 22" board mounted in two pieces. 700 thin, die-cut counters, 35 plastic warheads, one die, 2-4 players, playing time 2 hours up. Published 1980.

APOLCALYPSE, "the game of nuclear devastation," in many ways is similar to RISK. Opposing forces wage war over Europe, North Africa, and the seas around them in an effort to be the last surviving power. The map is divided into 270 regions. New armies are issued at the beginning of each player's turn, based on his position and total territory, he uses those to grab more territory. Each successful attack allows the player to either build a new bomb or extend the range of a pre-existing warhead. Warheads may be used at the beginning of a player's turn to devastate one targeted region and all other regions adjacent to it. The targeted region becomes radioactive, and may not be entered until it is "reconstructed." The combat system is innovative, with the defender required to guess the number of warheads (1-6) the attacker is committing. If he guesses correctly, the attacker loses that many armies. If not, the defender loses one army. The supply system is also interesting. Each region is identified as a city, or urban, rural, mountain, waste, or sea region. An additional army is generated by the enemy in urban regions, every three rural regions, etc. This system has its effects on strategy, until an empire covers a quarter or more of the board. At that point, strategy is pretty well lost in the oft-repeated and laborious task of counting your way through the empire four times over to determine vector, and area, etc.

There is one serious glitch in the rules. Attacks into a sea region automatically succeed, even if from another sea region. Attacks from one sea region to another should probably be resolved as per regular combat. Also, it is advisable to end the game when one player is recording most of the armies -- say 60% or 70% Otherwise the game becomes a game.

The graphics and component design are up to Games Workshop's usual high standard. The rules are short and clear. I would consider recommending APOCALYPSE if an equivalent game wasn't on the market at a cheaper price. Risks as I said above, is very similar, and suggested retail is $15.

--- David Ladyman

DUEL ARCANE (Gametorks, Ltd.); $5.95. Designed by John Shannonhouse. One 8½" x 5½" 28-page booklet, extra character record sheets, errata sheet, rulebook. Two players, playing time 5-10 minutes per combat. Published 1980.

This is a familiar subject with a familiar format, a game of combat between magicians, introduced by a short narrative. But the resemblance to Wizard and its illegitimate offspring ends there. DUEL ARCANE concerns shape-shifting, not spells. Instead of Gandalf vs. Saruman, combat in this game is more likely to resemble Merlin vs. Madam Mum, as characters shift from phoenix to amoeba to dragon to eagle in their attempts to best their opponents.

The rulebook is well-presented, which is a necessity, in view of the complexity of the game. The actual play, however, consists of a study of the format leads the player by the hand through filling out the intricate character record sheet.

Unfortunately, the game has some serious problems. The limited scope of the game does not justify the complexity of play. Rolling initiative in DUEL ARCANE can take as long as playing out an entire round of Wizard. The game mechanics, with unusual dice rolling methods (where, before, how you ever rolled a 3/7ths dice?) and erratic flow of play, can be frustrating. Movement, distance, and speed are abstracted, there is no tactical display or rules for counters or miniatures. Combat between more than two magicians is next to impossible to perform.

I can't recommend DUEL ARCANE as a

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ABBREVIATIONS

AC = armor class
AD&D = Advanced Dungeons and Dragons
AHL = Avalon Hill Company
APA = amateur press association (sometimes action point allowance)
BEW = bug-eyed monster
CHA (or CHA) = charisma
CON = constitution
CPM = combat power modifier
c.p. = copper piece(s)
CR = credit(s)
CS = Chambers and Sorcery
CRT = combat results table (sometimes cathode ray tube, i.e., TV screen)
d = die (3.6 mean three 6-sided dice)
D&D = Dungeons and Dragons
DM = dungeon master (sometimes die modifier)
DX (or DEX) = dexterity
EHP = evil high priest
c.p. = experience point(s) (sometimes electron piece(s))
E6 = Exile of the Petal Throne
FBL = Flying Buffalo, Inc.
FGU = Fantasy Games Unlimited
FRP (G) = fantasy role-playing (game)
GAMA = Games Manufacturers Association
GDW = Games Designer's Workshop
Gm = game master
c.p. = gold piece(s)
hp = hit point(s)
HTK = hits to kill
IQ (or INT) = intelligence
K = kilo-bytes of memory
LG = little green men
LK = luck
MA = movement allowance (sometimes magical/ military/mechanical aptitude/ability)
MR = monster rating
MUG = magic user
NPC = non-player character
OSI = Ohio Scientific
PBM = play by mail
PET = Personal Electronic Transactor (by Commodore)
POW = power
RAM = random-access memory
RPP = read-only memory
S & T = Strategy and Tactics
S&F = science fiction and fantasy
SIZE = size
s.p. = silver piece(s)
SPI = Simulations Publications, Inc.
SR = swing roll (sometimes strike rank)
ST (or STR) = strength
T&T = Tunnels and Trolls
TGG = Task Force Games
TFT = The Fantasy Trip
TR = Tandy-Radio Shack
TSR = TSR Hobbies, Inc. (formerly Tactical Studies Rules)
UVP = Universal Personality Profile
WIS = wisdom
ZOC = zone of control
PRIVATEER (First Edition Graphic Art Studios, POB 41320, Sacramento, CA 95842); $12. Designed by Scott Peterson. Box includes roll-up cloth map, 12 wooden counters, one metal token, one 5 1/2" x 17" sheet of rules, 2-4 players, playing time 1/2 hour. Published 1978.

This game is supposed to represent the conflict and glory of piracy in the semi-mythical Spanish Main. Each player starts with three "ships" in a corner of the map. He is supposed to bring back the "treasure" located on an island in the center. Movement is controlled by dice rolls. Combat is even simpler - when you land on an enemy ship, it sinks.

PRIVATEER's greatest asset is its beautiful and durable components. The map and counters are full-color. They even smell like the sea, and are easily worth $12. Admiring the components, it is almost possible to forget that there is practically no strategy in the game.

Simple, but not dull, PRIVATEER takes almost no thought at all. A good game to bring out after the bottle has gone around a couple of times.

- Forest Johnson

SUPPLEMENTS

THE COMPLEAT TAVERN (Gamelords, 18616 Grosbeck Terr., Gaithersburg, MD 20760), $3.95 Designed by Kerry Lloyd with Richard Meyer, 8 1/2" x 5 1/2" 24-page booklet, 11" x 17" map, sheet of cut-out cardstock furnishings, bagged. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

A hard day's labor of dragon destruction over, Boffo the Mighty and Druflus Dwarf retire to their favorite roadside inn to unwind with some hard-core drinking and wenching. After some amiable gog guzzling, of Druflus decides to try his luck at the house Chuck-a-Luck game. Seeing his hard-earned gold pieces disappear in what is obviously a rigged game, the somewhat turgid dwarf decides it's cheating time. A tight ensues, the bouncers attempt to intervene, Boffo comes to the aid of his companion, and suddenly the entire situation has degenerated into a free-for-all brawl! What to do now? The smart gamemaster will pull out his copy of THE COMPLEAT TAVERN and get down to brass tactics (or knuckling). At his fingertips will be guidelines on types and percentages of tavern accommodations, employees and clientele; rules on running games of skill and chance, such as darts, roulette, chuck-a-luck and arm wrestling, statistics on how much liquor can be imbibed by characters and its effects upon them, and - ah, yes - a very nice system for administering free-for-all barroom brawls!

THE COMPLEAT TAVERN has some nice features. The brawling system is for the most part clear and manageable - unless characters get involved in dozens of individual fights all at once. Characters' actions, from throwing roundhouse punches to ducking to grappling, are cross-referenced with opponents' actions (determined by die roll) to obtain damage results for both sides. If you duck, for example, and your opponent kicks, you take triple dam-

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THE VALETIAN ARCHITECTS

...with a hissing shriek a second Rask leaped from the autotapping, swinging a short battleaxe. Teloger snatched at the shield, but his force of the blow knocked him flat on his back a second time. As his shoulders hit he pushed up and moved to take the shield, flinging the Rask away before it could free its axe for another try. Scurrying to his feet, Teloger faced the Rask who'd already recovered its footing, and destroyed its axe. Teloger advanced a step and feinted with its saber tip—
as as he pierced the Rask through the axe, missed his helm and smashed into the Dwarv's shoulder. The mail shirt without stood, but the shoulder was broken.

Before Teloger could roll the Rask over to recover his sabre, the first Rask had recovered his breath and its feet.

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You will journey in a land rich in mysteries waiting to be unlocked by ones wise enough to seek clues and master riddles. To complement the game we publish the quarterly magazine VALIANCE which contains the latest Veletian "prose", dramatizations of encounters by the most resourceful players, rule modifications, and continuing history of the world of Veletia.

A 12 tur subscription to LORDS OF VALETIA is $25.00. The rulebook, a subscription to VALIANCE, for as long as you remain a player, and all starting materials (maps, supplements, etc., except for return postage) are absolutely free to players if satisfied with the initial materials, new subscribers must return the Rulebook and will then receive a full refund.

Lords of Veletia is an adult game open to anyone 18 years of age or older living within the continental U.S. and having a P.O. Box or address which is available for further correspondence. All mail must be marked in U.S. currency.

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Tell us you saw it in The Space Gamer.
No Traveller player should pass this one up.
—William A. Barton


This is a set of expansion rules for FGU's private role-playing game. Mentioned in this volume are rules for voodoo, Indian characters and NPCs, guidelines for doctors, new rules for ships, and three game scenarios.

I personally am in favor of this supplement, it marks a step toward fleshing out the extremely gaudy Skull and Crossbones game system.

Because it is consistent in organization and method with Skull and Crossbones, though, it shares some of the same flaws, notably sketchy, simplistic writing. It is important to use the parent RPK, it should have been included in the basic game. And it will still take a few more supplements of this nature before Skull and Crossbones is really an adequate system.

Recommended to those who have bought and liked the original RPG. Consider, though, if Skull and Crossbones is akin to a 16-chapter book with 8 chapters missing, and each of these supplements provides 1 or 2 of the missing chapters, thus will become an expensive game.

—Aaron Allston


SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST is a solitaire adventure scenario designed to accommodate from 1-4 1st or 2nd level characters of any class or race. It's called SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST because it's a good way to get rid of any really weak 1st or 2nd level characters.

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST uses a page and number solitaire system, similar to Metagaming's Microquest series. Travels, Assasins, Monks, Rangers, and Paladins go through the dungeon as fighters. However, each gets a special ability because of his class. Clerics, Druids, Illusionists, and Magic Users are limited to wam spells. The use of magic items is restricted.

The scenario is a good way for low to average characters to gain experience points, treasure, magic items, or even a chance to improve their characteristics. Although good for weak characters, SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST is a breeze for stronger-than-average characters. The dungeon is very simple, making mapping unnecessary. Lastly, the pages contains a lot of unneeded paragraphs — you never run into them unless you happen to go to the wrong number.

Instant death for your character is a little too high a price to pay just because you happened to read the directions.

If you want an easy way to advance characters to 3rd or 2nd level, along with grabbing treasure and magic items along the way, put SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST. But if you want a real challenge stuck to your local DM.

—Patrick V. Reyes

OREGON TRAIL

An exciting role playing, boardgame where players take the roles of wagon masters leading wagon trains across the American West. The game comes with seven historical scenarios of varying length and is playable for one to eight players.

OREGON TRAIL comes complete with a 22 by 25 inch four color map, board game rules, lot of character reference sheets, party status sheets, eight pawns for marking player movement, two 8-sided dice, and one 20-sided die. Everything needed to enjoy a full role playing game with encounters along the trail.

Highly playable solo and including a point scale for victory conditions, OREGON TRAIL is ideal for tournament and club use. This fast paced new game even includes systems for dealing with the various aspects of the hostile environment and encounters with the various Indian tribes, Early Indian encounters can be very hard or very easy depending upon the abilities of the wagon master/player. Peaceful relations and trade or hostile actions are both possibilities. Even weather disease, river crossings and exploring for new-famint towns play important parts in this game of travel and exploration where speed must take second place to concern for survival.

OREGON TRAIL is available from your local board game store. It is available from Fantasy Games Unlimited Inc. P.O. Box 582, Ronkonkoma, NY 11776. The price for these many hours of enjoyment is $15.00 postpaid.

Coming Soon From FGU:

BUSIWAR: An expanded and revised version of this popular role playing game of legendary Japan, and the Samurai.

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AFTERMATH: A new role playing game set in a post Holocaust world with many challenges to survival.

ELEMENTARY WATSON: An expanded version of this role playing boardgame. Expanded rules and a different file.

DIADIM: Science Fiction boardgame of conflict between developing StarCultures within the Distant Clusters.
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No. 17. GEV designer's intro, strategy for Chitin I, variants for Imperium, Mecies, and a combination Ogre/Ravens variant; Warpgate Intron.

No. 18. Black designer's intro, variant scenarios for Invasion America and War of the Ring, additional equipment for Traveller, mounted Mecies, "Referee, Oltre Yae-
self!" (role-playing GM techniques).

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No. 25. Stellar Conquest issue... designer's article, tournament tactics, and variant scenarios. Also — strategy in Rivets, benefit-cost analysis for Ice War, "Everyday Life in The Fantasy Trip."

No. 26. One of designer's intro, tactics in GEV, variations on Wizard, Computers in Traveller, Mecies, and a variant that puts human forces into Rivets.

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No. 28. 1979 Game Survey results; Overmen in TIT; A Guide to SF/Fantasy Game Publishers; Task Force Games report; Writers' and Artists' guides, 7 pages of reviews, Game Design Part 2, Ours Ex Machina.

No. 29. Fantasy Trip designer's intro, Painted Fantasy Miniatures, Fantasy and SF game magazine surveys, Game Design Part 3, more Ours Ex Machina, 7 pages of reviews.

No. 30. KUNG FU 2190, Painting Fantasy Miniatures Part II, Index to Game Articles; Game Design Part 4, Programmable Calculators; 10 pages of reviews.

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THE VANGUARD REACHES is Paranoia Press' first approved Traveller sector. It lies to spinward of the Imperium (2 sectors spinward and one rimward of the Spinward Marches) and encompasses 16 new subsectors and several client and independent star states.

These include Zhdan, Imperial, Arian, Varg and Solanion client states in the independent Altearian Confederation, and Edylat Magnacrus, the latter two populated by the furry, humanoid Mermans and the amphibious Esylat respectively. VANGUARD REACHES presents information on each individual planet per subsector in essentially the same format as GDW's The Spinward Marches, supplying name, universal planet, population, and other pertinent data. One page is devoted to each subsector, with supplemental information located in the library data section. The insert map neatly delineates each subsector, locating specific planets, jump routes, capitals and other items of interest, such as the Hule Nebula.

VANGUARD REACHES has several features of interest to the devoted Traveller player. The sector is a veritable melting pot of the races of the Traveller universe. The proximity of so many different states can spice up any campaign, as can the presence of such constructs as the ringworld of Assan Tanley and a (possibly) unknown, uncharted territory. For those who wish to conduct research on the many races and planets, VANGUARD REACHES provides a wealth of information that may be used.

As VANGUARD REACHES reveals the many races and planets, so it presents the many races and planets of the Traveller universe. The proximity of so many different states can spice up any campaign, as can the presence of such constructs as the ringworld of Assan Tanley and the (possibly) unknown, uncharted territory.

The insert map neatly delineates each subsector, locating the various planets and other items of interest, such as the Hule Nebula. The insert map provides a wealth of information that may be used.

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The insert map neatly delineates each subsector, locating the various planets and other items of interest, such as the Hule Nebula. The insert map provides a wealth of information that may be used.
ful four-page castle index is located in the front of the booklet.

Castle sizes range from small walled keeps and towers to enormous fortresses and walled towns. There is no scale, the DM must supply his own.

The CASTLE BOOK has many interesting ideas in it. For the price, it's a bargain.

—Kurt Butterfield

VILLAGE BOOK (Judges Guild); $2.75. Designed by Bill Davis and Marc Summerlot. Play and approved for D&D. One 64-page 8½" x 11" booklet. Published 1978.

Within the pages of this booklet forty-eight small villages are clearly mapped out in gray on seven� millimeter heat paper. The layout of each village is believable and well planned. The surrounding terrain is left purposefully sketchy so that the referee may fill the village into his own campaign with no difficulty at all. There are also nine pages of helpful tables for the random generation of things such as population, technological level, walls defenses, and shops. There's even a large list of tables for randomly naming your villages. All of these tables must be used with great care and discretion on the part of the referee as some rather strange results can pop up if caution is not exercised. I recommend that the referee just choose from the tables instead of boisterously rolling the dice. In the end it will probably make more sense and save the poor DM constant dice rolling.

If you're one of those judges who hates to spend a lot of time mapping and planning out a village, or if you often find yourself needing one on the spur of the moment, then this booklet is for you.

—Kurt Butterfield

COMPUTER GAMES

ATTACK FORCE (Big Five Software); $15.95. cassette for the 16K TRS-80 Level I Model II. ($17.95 for 32K disk.) One player; playing time 15 minutes. Cannot be saved. Published 1980.

Your defending ship accelerates around the past as the enemy ram-ships twist and turn in the playfield. Their flagship initially hides in a safe area off to one side of the screen, occasionally shooting bolts your way. As your points increase you find your own ship moving more slowly and there are more flagships to deal with. Gradually you find yourself cornered, then overrun by ramships or blasted by a flagship and the screen clears for your next ship.

This machine language program has the usual wonderful Big Five graphics and sound. The program keeps track of the ten best scores to date and neatly handles the complexity of instantaneous acceleration. The tactics of the computer in trying to overwhelm you are generally quite reasonable and I find the ever-mounting pressure as your score increases prevents the game from becoming stale.

The only problem I might mention is play balance. You get one extra player ship for every 10,000 points. This is too tough for most players. Some number around 7,000 might make for a better game.

This is another strong entry in the Big Five line and I strongly recommend it for any arcade buff.

—J. Mathewson

FLYING SAUCERS (Radio Shack), $9.95. Tape for 4K Level II TRS-80. 10 levels of play. One player; playing time 2-3 minutes per game. Published 1979.

The object of FLYING SAUCERS is to destroy as many alien saucers as possible in the allotted time. The saucers fly across the screen attempting to escape your shots. Occasionally a "super saucer" comes across the screen, and when it is hit it causes all other saucers on the screen to explode. At the bottom of the screen the score, misses, shots, hits, and time left are displayed. When a player fires and misses he is penalized. A score of 400 will earn extra time. The graphics are excellent, the SAUCER can be guided while in flight. The player can also have multiple shots on the screen at any given point in the game. The game also forces the player to make a direct hit. Otherwise, the missile will bounce off the saucer.

Unfortunately, the display is too busy. The player often can't tell if he got a hit. There is no sound. The game also gets boring after a while because it's too easy.

Overall, FLYING SAUCERS is OK. However, I cannot recommend it because there is a better game with the same theme (and price) on the market, Air Raid (reviewed TSG 30).

—Glenn Mal

MONEY MADNESS (Instant Software); $9.95 16K cassette for the TRS-80. One or two players; 1 hour. Published 1980.

Two programs, Millionaire and Timber Baron, are in this package. The object of Millionaire is to parlay $1000 into a million within 15 years. You can buy and sell properties, trade stocks and bonds, and sell products. Timber Baron is a simulation of the lumber business. You start with four million dollars and attempt to increase your net worth by buying, growing, cutting and selling timber. Forest fires, droughts, and labor strikes are some of the problems with which you will have to cope.

Timber Baron is fascinating. You can compete against another player or the computer. Skill and some luck are needed to beat the computer. Timber rights and land are sold at auction. Learning how much to bid is challenging. Deciding when to trim, selectively cut, or clear cut the trees gives you the feel of managing your company.

Neither of these programs has sound or graphics. Millionaire soon becomes tedious since the main activity is accepting or rejecting randomly generated bids for your production. For those interested in a business simulation, I recommend this package. Many single programs cost more. While Timber Baron is of primary interest, you may also enjoy a few games of Millionaire.

—Bruce Campbell


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Watch for our new game, ULTIMA . . . also by Lord British!
In STAR WARRIOR. As a member of the Furies ("good" mercenaries), your mission is either to create a diversion (Scenario One) or to find and kill the evil ruler of the planet of Forax (Scenario Two). Being a Fury you get to choose from three different point systems each armed with an assortment of deadly weapons (or customize a suit if you have tank). There are seven levels of difficulty.

These five levels are just an example of all the options available to the player. During play, the program allows the player to input 20 different levels (from movement commands, 6 combat commands, and 8 special commands). The game also asks you how long you wish to play. The game itself is a little better than the DiabloQuest graphics for TRS-80). Sound is optional, it adds excitement, but slows play. The best feature is the exciting "guns." You must sight the enemy and they must sight you, then you can be fired up on an unseen enemy.

The biggest problem with STAR WARRIOR is once a command is entered, it can't be recalled. It is also difficult, in the cassette version, to determine if you are in flight or on the ground.

If you have the money buy the game, if you don't have the money, get the money and buy the game. Highly recommended to any gamers or arcade buffs.

- Glenn Mal


Your tiny spacecraft wends its way through hyperspace. The player gammers points for landing on planets, discovering artifacts, and fighting off the Kyranan fighters and debris fields. There are all sorts of clever little obstacles to overcome, you will enjoy escaping the dread clutter of the hyperspace storm, and be pleased with the view as you drop below the event horizon into the black hole. There are bases to land on and planets to orbit. Generally, it all looks like a five-year mission to go where no man has gone before.

The game's strongest points are in its graphics and execution. The Kyranan enemies looks threatening. The alien city on the planet is well done. Having the graphics and movement done in machine language gives the game a "you are there" flavor. The Kyranan fighters cannot be lost by simply diving into the next quadrant. The little devils pursue even if you ship into hyperspace.

Weak points are substantial, however. There are a couple of program bugs which can leave afterimages of your ship as you try to land. A player can rack up points by landing over and over on the same planet. Only one treasure actually does any thing for you, and in all the games I played I never managed to find the blasted thing. The most important, once the basic techniques of landing and combat are learned, there are no new problems to challenge you.

For the price I feel this is a good buy. Certainly you will enjoy the first few hours of play. In its present state, I don't believe I'd call it a classic.

- Jon Misehon

TIME TRAVELER (Krell Software, 21 Mimbark Dr., Stony Brook, NY, 11790). $24.95. Cassette for the TRS-80, Apple II, and PET. One player, playing time 3 or 4 hours. Cannot be saved. Published in 1980.

You are a time travel who is attempting to acquire 14 "magic" rings in 14 different eras of history. The rings give you powers far beyond those of mortal men but the time machine is on the brink, so you can't count on staying for a definite period of time in any one era. Victory is achieved by collecting all 14 rings back to the time machine laboratory.

- Jon Misekon

The best features of this adventure are the use of a map and good period descriptions to try and give one the feeling he is wandering in a far time. How would you like to try to prise your way out of prison in France 1789? How about stealing the inventories in Rome 50 BC?

TIME TRAVELER unfortunately falls in two critical areas. First, the four pages of documentation that come with the game will take a long time just learning the parameters of persuasion, combat, and what-have-you. There is no hint what you are or what you're doing. Second, other than the descriptions, it doesn't seem to make any difference whether you're in Egypt 1350 BC or Germany 1944. Really, long games that can't be saved are frustrating.

Overall I'd say this game has some great ideas but fails to give the player enough information so that you can just sit down and enjoy playing. Those who delight in delving into a long game may find this enjoyable. I'd recommend you wait for their next game.

- Jon Misekon

CONTEMPORARY GAMES

FIFTH CORPS, THE SOVIET BREAKTHROUGH AT FULDA AND HOF GAP THE NURNBERG MINEC (SPI), $9.95 each. Designed by Jim Frazier and Charles Kamp. Vols. 1, 2 in the CENTRAL FRONT SERIES. Each boxed with one 22" x 34" four-color map, one 8-page 8¼" x 11" standard rules book, one exclusive rules booklet, and one dice. FIFTH CORPS has 200 die-cut counters; HOF GAP has 300 die-cut counters and 200 rules pages, depending on scenario, Published 1980. It's quite a concept to take all of West Germany, map it out at a 1:250,000 scale in ten separate maps, and then build a series of games around each map. When the series is complete, you have a battlefield/simulated simulation of a probable Warsaw Pact attack on NATO forces. This is SPI's third try with a U.S./Western conflict in Central Europe (previous efforts including NATION AND THE NEXT WAR).

The game system is built around operation points (used for movement and initiating combat) which basically represent time, and friction points which accumulate from expending operation points and combat results. Each player may have an unlimited number of phases per turn, the turn ends when both players finally pass. Six friction points and a unit is dead.

Despite the detailed point system, it's basically move-fight. If the Soviets or the NATO forces want to outmaneuver, they do so by using their moves out quickly with additional moving and fighting, they can. The chrome is lavish, including electronic counter-measures (ECM), chemicals, and tactical nuclear weapons. The Soviets clearly have the more interesting play with offensive momentum, blitzkrieg-type options, and some interesting special rules for a first-turn surprise effort. The NATO side is greatly well committed to a "plug the line" role, awaiting their reinforcements. Later volumes will probably include some of the REFORGER deployments, allowing NATO counter-offensive capabilities.

CENTRAL FRONT is a "simulation" and strictly a NATO vs. the hard-core NATO types. The mechanics tend to some complex and even though plenty of scenarios are available in the current games, the thing should be approached as a 10-map monster to be fully realized — with a final price tag probably in excess of $100. It's SPI's best effort to date in this area, and the intended audience should be well pleased.

- Nick Schneider

NATIONAL GAMING SOCIETY

You've showered Barbarons from all over the planet of Orkian Empire. With sword and missile, you've feated your way to victory. From Tlaxial to Gettysburg From Tobruk to Stalingrad. From the outset, you've burned, pillaged, and won battles. You've crushed the onslaught of the Warsaw Pact steamerliners. No Ork has ever come close to your Command Post. Across the galaxy, you've annihilated countless starships, and plundered thousands of worlds. And on alternate Earths, your skill and wisdom has spelled doom for space wolves and Orcs. All of your friends have learned to fear your aura. You are the greatest gamer around. Now it's time for you to let us know your skills. It's time for the National Gaming Society.

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NATIONAL GAMING SOCIETY □ 232 Bailey's Run Road □ Cressington, PA, 15030
PUBLICATIONS

GAME'S GUIDE. Published by Brian E. Carmody (Hawkins Corner Rd., RR 1, Box 224, Lee Cn., NY 13363). No cover price; subscriptions $12 per year (6 issues) 20 8½" x 11" pages, plus cover, First issue March 1980. This is a new magazine dedicated largely to reviews (three historical, two fantasy, one SF), a "spotlight" article on Nova Game Designs, the Organs ballot and information on the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design, and two blank pages. Future issues will include a "Game's Official" classified section—50 words or less, for free. With so many games on the market (including many which shouldn't be), there's always room for more reviews. This magazine is less polished than Richard Berg's Review of Game (reviewed in issue 37) but follows the same general philosophy of being a less critical reviews for the money. The "spotlight" is also a nice feature, company news is a good thing. Quality of the reviews in this issue varied; the Magic Realms review was forthright and complete, for instance, but a couple of the others had a very low signal-to-noise ratio. The humorous "New Pation" reviews used as fillers were a nice touch.

Weak points: Production is semi-amateur—but this is, after all, Issue No. 1. Those blank pages were distastening, and some of those reviews needed a lot of editing. This looks to be aimed at maximum information with minimum glitch, and I hope it didn't hurt you to do it. I look for issue 2 to be better.

I gave it a guarded recommendation. If your budget is very limited and you want a variety of subjects covered, then one of the "standard" series game magazines might serve you better at a lower cost per page. But if all you want is reviews, or if you can afford a number of subscriptions, give GAME'S GUIDE a try.

— Steve Jackson

BOOKS

THE BEST OF BOARD WARGAMING (Hippocamp Books), $16.95. Edited by Nicky Palmer. 960 pages, $4.95. Recommended. Published 1981. This is a sequel to (or perhaps it would be better to say an expansion of) the author's Comprehensive Guide to Board Wargaming. It leads off with several introductory chapters on different facets of board gaming, followed with 107 mostly capsule-sized reviews and ends up with a breakdown of games by type. Recommendations for quick games, games of various periods, the editor's list of game companies, magazines, and sources. The introductory chapters are the most interesting part of the book. Palmer has been gaming for years and it shows. He names the games as he plays them. His comments on design philosophy and "honest" vs. "dishonest" design are valuable reading. Regrettably, though, this isn't the "essential handbook for all levels of player" that the jacket blurbs call it. For beginners, it does not even try to cover as much as a child's toy store, about board gaming. But it doesn't cover board gaming well enough. It's bad at data and incomplete. "Closing date" for material was spring 1980, so it's already a year behind... and some of the listings are much older than that. Example: The bibliography listing for TSG makes it clear that Palmer hasn't seen a copy of this magazine since 1977; he lists it as a pocket-sized publication of "Metagaming Concepts." (And Metagaming dropped the "Concepts" from its name years ago, a detail which has been noticed by everyone except the SPI magazines and the British publications.) Even and Gammescience are totally missing from the list of publishers, while Task Force is, for some reason, shown as a subsidiary of Judges Guild. The omission of Morgen's listings in the region A book that omits (for example) Star Fleet Battles, Cosmic Encounter, The Traveller-related boardgames, WarParty, and GEN — and passes over Stellar Conquest and the StarForce trilogy with a single bare mention — isn't about the "best," no matter what the title. And the short chapter on computer games gives no evidence that M. Palmer has actually seen any example other than Starweb, it's devoted mostly to speculation about computer assistance for paper games.

The reviews that were included weren't what they should have been. They have a very serious, high level, and include 1-100 point ratings for each game on excellence level, rules clarity, complexity, realism, and solitaire playability. But they totally omit the designer for each game (irritating) and the publisher's price (unforgivable)! Evident in the reviews is a bias against short games and toward "monsters." This may not be bad, but it seems to be to his own opinion — but it's out of step with the hobby.

This one belongs in the library of the game club, collector, or serious designer. As a reference work for the average gamer, fantasy/SCI or otherwise, I couldn't recommend it. Consumer Guide to Computer Games (reviewed, TSG 32) is bigger, better, and half the price.

— Steve Jackson

NONEXISTENT GAMES

BANANAQUEST (Goupy Games), $8.95. Designed by Evan Earle, Second Edition. Boxed (Geometricchoice) with 4-page 8½" x 11" rule book (something less), 10 pages of errata, 2 color (black and white) 8½" x 11" maps, 98% counters, 2¼ million bananas, and 2 three-sided dice. Published once upon a time.

BANANAQUEST is a two-player (or in case of solitaire, one) game. One player takes the role of Hans Helmstecher, a German infantry soldier, Hans has volunteered to get food to feed the starving German Sixth Army. Somewhere in the underground under-world underneath Stalingrad, the Russians have a supply depot with 2¼ million bananas. Hans' job is to find the depot and bring the bananas home. The other player takes the side of the Russians who try to eat as many bananas as possible before Hans finds the depot.

BANANAQUEST has its good points. It's just that no one has found them yet.

BANANAQUEST has its bad points. The rules are still incomplete. (Maybe another 200 pages of tests will be sufficient.) The map is in two colors. What about people who are color-blind? But the biggest flaw of BANANAQUEST is the 2¼ million bananas. The game I purchased had been sitting on the game store's shelf for over two years. Can you imagine how bananas taste after two years?

BANANAQUEST is an excellent game for deranged, psychopathic banana lovers of this world. If you're one of them, this game is for you. On the other hand, if you're a creative gamer like myself you can also get something else out of the game. If you place the two three-sided dice together, you'll have a semi usable six-sided die.

— Paul Manzi
Letters

After some of the various "articles" I've seen in various zines regarding various games/companies that just happen to advertise in said zine, where the review or article reads like another advertisement, it's certainly nice to see you take a chance and advise everyone on the status of Lords of Valetta...

Thank you for publishing Prof. M.A.R. Barker's letter, I've long considered EPT to be one of the best role-playing game around.

Mark Goldberg
Chicago, IL

Thank you for the recent "plug" in your magazine of my new magazine, Wargame Commentaries. However, my magazine is NOT open to a general subscription. I operate privately and I send out copies on a prefered basis. Therefore, readers, do NOT send me an order, for I shall have to return it. Thank you.

R.A. Franz
Winchester, VA

Your "Cardboard Heroes" are the answer to a long-standing problem. I'm a D&D enthusiast and a school teacher who has been "spreading the news" for quite a few years now. Games are more fun in three dimensions, but the figures - I Your product is ideal for my purposes. Thank you! I just bought out the entire fantasy shipment at the hobby shop.

Henry A. Ott
New York, NY

I enjoyed the article, "Notes for Novice Dungeon Masters" in TSG 35. Very useful for the novices at whom it was aimed, and containing many an "Oh yeah!" for more experienced DMs.

Hearing this article, I am inspired to suggest a few more sources. There are a number of magazines oriented toward history, archaelogy, natural history, etc., which can be helpful. The most obvious of these is National Geographic. Any self-respecting library should have back issues and index volumes.

And (this one's a bit more obscure), the books of David Macaulay. This last Christmas, my wife Mamazon brought me his books, Castle and Pyramid. I advise any game masters to seek them out (and his other books, Cathedral, City, and Underground) and check them out. Though classified as children's books, you will find them interesting, if not useful.

Ben V. Kloepper
St. Louis, MO

Errata

1980 GAME SURVEY

In the final pasteup of issue 38 (see "Where We're Going" in this issue) a column of type was omitted from the listing of survey results. Not good...

At any rate, here are the missing numbers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SF RPG SUPPLEMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twilight's Peak</td>
<td>83  (19.3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>76 Patrons</td>
<td>75  (21.5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bright Face/Mithril</td>
<td>74  (15.1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Guard</td>
<td>74  (6.4%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mercenary</td>
<td>74  (5.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Station Gamma</td>
<td>73  (11.0%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow/Amie Nova</td>
<td>67  (17.0%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tancred</td>
<td>66  (26.1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sector 57</td>
<td>65  (30.7%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drake's Station</td>
<td>62  (13.3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lay Sector</td>
<td>60  (22.0%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encounters in the Phoenix Quadrant</td>
<td>58  (19.9%)</td>
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<td>Pen-Lot's World</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spacefarer's Guide to Alien Monsters</td>
<td>53  (18.7%)</td>
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<td>The Evening Star</td>
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<tr>
<th>FANTASY TACTICAL GAMES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Melee</td>
<td>7.8 (1.4%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wizard</td>
<td>7.8 (3.2%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swashbuckler</td>
<td>6.8 (8.7%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>King of the Mountain</td>
<td>6.6 (32.6%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arms Law</td>
<td>6.5 (35.3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water Golem</td>
<td>6.2 (21.1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valkenburg Castle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hero</td>
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<td>Stomp</td>
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<tr>
<td>War of the Ring</td>
<td>6.3 (4.6%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Divine Right</td>
<td>6.3 (8.3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lords of the Middle Sea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dragon Lords</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spellbinder</td>
<td>5.7 (18.5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lords &amp; Wizards</td>
<td>5.4 (23.5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swords &amp; Sorcery</td>
<td>5.3 (5.5%)</td>
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| SF BOARDGAMES          | | |
|------------------------|-----|
| Cosmic Encounter       | 6.5 (6.9%) |
| Dune                   | 6.5 (5.0%)  |
| Space Future           | 6.5 (41.3%) |
| Quarks                 | 6.0 (30.3%) |
| Dr. Who                | 5.0 (30.7%) |
| 4th Dimension          | 4.5 (13.8%) |

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<td>Junta</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wizard's Quest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dungeon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Death and Destruction</td>
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<td>Fantastic Encounters</td>
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<td>Mythology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magic Realm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Darkover</td>
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<td>Titan</td>
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<td>Hammer of Thul</td>
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<td>RuneQuest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Land of the Rising Sun</td>
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<td>Thieves' Guild</td>
<td>7.3 (31.1%)</td>
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<td>Infinity</td>
<td>6.7 (35.5%)</td>
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<td>Advanced Dungeons and Dragons</td>
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<td>Complutus Warlock</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chivalry &amp; Sorcery</td>
<td>5.9 (7.8%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DragonQuest</td>
<td>5.9 (4.1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bushido</td>
<td>5.7 (11.1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Odyssey</td>
<td>5.6 (31.4%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moonstone of Mandrake</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tunnels &amp; Trolls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Original Dungeons and Dragons</td>
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<td>DeathMaze</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Fantasy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adventures in Fantasy</td>
<td>4.7 (22.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arduan Gnome</td>
<td>4.5 (14.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Conflict Simulations Games Club ($335 Lester St., Indianapolis, IN 46208) publishes Combat Zone, Price: $6/issue; single copy $2.

Gameshop has changed its name to Nova Game Designs, Inc. Upcoming releases include a number of games based on the Ace of Aces system, a WWII air game, another WWII game, Bounty Hunter (Old West) and Crossed Swords (Fantasy). They are also planning to publish a multiplayer boardgame, Axis and Allies.

Magnet Fantasia (1626 N. Wilcox No. 403, Hollywood, CA 90028) is "a bi-monthly journal devoted to the art of Computerized Fantasy Simulation." Price $2.95/copy

High Passage is a new monthly devoted to Traveller. See ad this issue.

The Army produces a plastic "dice maze," which takes all the skill out of dice rolling (but keeps them on the table). Prices are $9.95 (small), $19.95 (large), $39.95 (tournament).

Games Workshop has announced three forthcoming releases: Troll Tower, Star Hunters and Death Carts.

Judges Guild has a new magazine, The Imperial Pegasus, including SF and Fantasy game articles and fiction. Print run 3,000, immediate distribution $3.10. Payment to contributors $1-5/page for copy, $5-10 for art. Editors: Mike Reagen and Harold Kahn.

FGU has bought the following titles from Phoenix Games: Aftermath (for release in May), Elementary, Watson (expanded version due in June), and Budinio (boxed edition for July).

Relix Associates has released an "Interstellar Trad Ludus" and a "Player Character Chronicle" to add to its line of record sheets and play aids. A pad of 50 sheets of either costs $2.50.

Programma International offers Myxious, a 32K program for the TRS-80. Price: $34.95.

The Prometheus Video Project is a group of SF fans, writers and artists who are seeking to create a new TV series. Quotations should be sent with an SASE to: Russell Coody, 3028 Ryan St., Dept. 154, Lake Charles, LA 70601.

The World Space Federation (POB 283, Grandview, MO 64030) is a citizens' group lobbying in support of the space program. Send an SASE for further information.

Automated Simulations has released a package including three of its games - The Dasterson of Ryn, Morlesc Tower and Rescue at Risk. Price $49.95.

House of Pegasus, a new company, has announced the release of the boardgame Space Road.

James B. Lutzy (POB 27, Belmont, ND 58136) offers the amateur zine Gemology: Price: $7.50/12 issues, or $75/canopy.
Calendar

May 1-3: USACON 3. Gaming con for SF&F, RP, and boardgaming at University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL. Contact Leo Vlahin, 5856 Lisle Dr., Mobile, AL 36608.

May 22-25: GRIMCON III. SF/F gaming con, Oakland, CA. Contact Origins '81, 455 Hgenberger Road, Oakland, CA 94612. Contact P.O. Box 4153, Berkeley, CA 94704.

May 29-31: COMPUTERFEST '81. Computer hobby show. SASE to MAAC, P.O. Box 20205, Columbus, OH 43220.

June 5-7: DALFCON '81 Gaming con - several tournaments, dealers, etc. Contact Dale Con, 12800 Abrams Rd., Dallas, TX 75243.

June 5-7: PHRINGCON II. SF con, including T&T tournament. Contact PhringCon, Inc., P.O. Box 128, Tempe, AZ 85281.

June 12-14: MDG MICHCODN 10 GAMEFEST. Contact Metro Detroit Gamers, P.O. Box 677, Troy, MI 48099.

June 19-21: STRATACON II. Boardgaming, miniature sales, SF, and RPG. Contact G. Patterson, 5373 Commercial St., Vancouver, BC V5P 3N4.

June 26-28: GAME CDN ONE. Contact Game Alliance, 481 Ferry St., Salem, OR 97301.

July 3-5: ORIGINS '81. To be held in Danice Motel, San Mateo, CA. Contact Origins '81, P.O. Box 5033, San Jose, CA 95150.

July 9-12: 1981 IPMS NATIONAL CONVENTION Scale model con. SASE to Ed Cameron, 29 Mathew St., South Farmingdale, NY 11735.

July 11-12: MINNESOTA CAMPAIGN FIVE. Contact Mr Jeff Berry, 343 E. 19th St. Apt. 4B, Minneapolis, MN 55406.

July 16-19: CWA-CON '81. Warpinn & adventure gaming con. Contact P.O. Box 10397, Ft. Dearborn Station, Chicago, IL 60610.

July 17-19: ODYSSEY '81. Con featuring all kinds of gaming. Sponsored by the UNH Simulations Games Club, for information contact R. Thanksgiving, UNHSCC, Memorial Union Building, Durham, NH 03824.

July 17-20: 9th ANNUAL FLYING BUFFALO CONVENTION. Contact P.O. Box 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252.

July 23-26: GENCON EAST. Contact at P.O. Box 139, Middletown, NJ 07748.

July 31-August 2: MAINCON. Boardgaming, miniature sales, FRP. Contact Mr John Wheeler, Director, Maincon, 102 Front St., Bath, ME 04430.

July 31-August 2: NANCON 88-IV. General gaming con. Send SASE to Nan's Game Headquarters, 118 Briargrove Center, 6100 Westheimer, Houston, TX 77057.

August 5: DRAGONMEET IV. SF&F gaming con. Chelsea Town Hall, Kings Road, London SW3.

August 6-9: 5th ANNUAL RANROG AREA WAR GAMES CONVENTION. Contact Edward E. Stevens, Jr., 83 N. Main St., Rockland, ME 04841.

August 13-16: GENCON XIV. FRPG & new gaming releases. Contact GenCon XIII, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

September 3-7: DENVENTION TWO. SF con. Contact Denvention Two, P.O. Box 11545, Denver, CO 80211. or (303) 433-9774.

CONVENTION ORGANIZERS - let us know about your con! Free publicity never hurts.

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☐ a constipated unicorn in heat
☐ a frost-giant that has relocated to Miami
☐ a nazgul with diarrhea
☐ a one-legged giant with bunions
☐ Saruman's mother-in-law
☐ a pygmy with a backfiring blowgun
☐ a cross-eyed wizard with the evil eye
☐ I plead the fifth amendment; evil spirits may rise
☐ All equally dangerous
☐ None of the above

Answer: None of the above. It may be YOU or it may be someone you know. What do you look for? A gamer who is looking for some game but can't find it. A gamer who has read about a game but no one is stocking it. A gamer who is desperately trying to find some 20 sided dice. How can a gamemaster or character rid himself of such a dangerous beast? Send him to THE COMPLEAT STRATEGIST. We can calm the beast with a selection that would be a treasure trove fit for a wizard.

If he's not near any of our three locations, then let him call or write our New York store and we will gladly help the beast.

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In New Jersey: 209 Glenridge Ave., NJ 07042 201-744-6622 11-7 Tue-Sat, Thurs-til 9:00
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☐ Do NOT include my name and address in the 1981 RPGA™ Directory

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Steve Jackson to the TSG subscribers, greetings —

Four or five years ago, back in the Dark Ages, when I still spent more time playing games than trying to design them, I wasted a couple of weeks making up some bumper stickers. I had a few thousand printed up on heavy vinyl (the kind that outlasts the bumper it’s on)... and, for a while, I’d sell them at conventions. Paid for my meals that way, anyhow.

When I get really involved in game design, I stick the stickers into a closet and forget about them. Well, last week I ran into them again. I figured (since I’ve got them anyway) I might as well put in an ad and see if anyone else out there has the proper twisted sense of humor to enjoy them.

Most of them, obviously, are Trekkie-type. A couple aren’t. I’ve noticed that very few people understand the Cthulhu one — but those that understand like it...

All stickers are EXACTLY TWICE THE SIZE SHOWN.

Anyway: send me a check and I’ll send you some stickers. If you want to combine this with a game or magazine order, go right ahead.

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By 2200, the age of Chivalry had been dead for six and a half centuries. Human nature, on the other hand, was alive and thriving. The same motivations which had driven man before, had given him the stars, but also more wars.

Space travel had become a reality in the 20th century. The ion pulse engine, combined with masts of solar sails, could cheaply propel a spacecraft to near light speeds. Given time, a ship could go anywhere . . . given time.

Time was what the human race did not have. Man’s life was simply too brief to travel to the stars with any hope of living long enough to see planetfall.

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Thus, the exodus began. Massive ships filled with hundreds of thousands of Earth’s misfortunes left for destinations as disparate as Betalguese and Arcturus.

Accompanying the migration were the ultra-warriors. Space was not at a premium but the material to build ships and weapons was. The conclusion was obvious; if one man with an E-suit could fulfill the function of an army, then an army was not necessary. A few men could defend a colony against almost any forseeable threat short of a space-going fleet.

Soon the ultra-warrior had become the knight-errant of space. In place of a horse they rode ATV’s, armor was replaced with E-suits, the lance became a heat blaster, the sword a frost bolt. They could be as chivilrous as Galahad or as cruel as Mordred.

Thus, mankind was little different than he had been throughout history. The ultra-warrior became the knight of the 23rd Century.

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