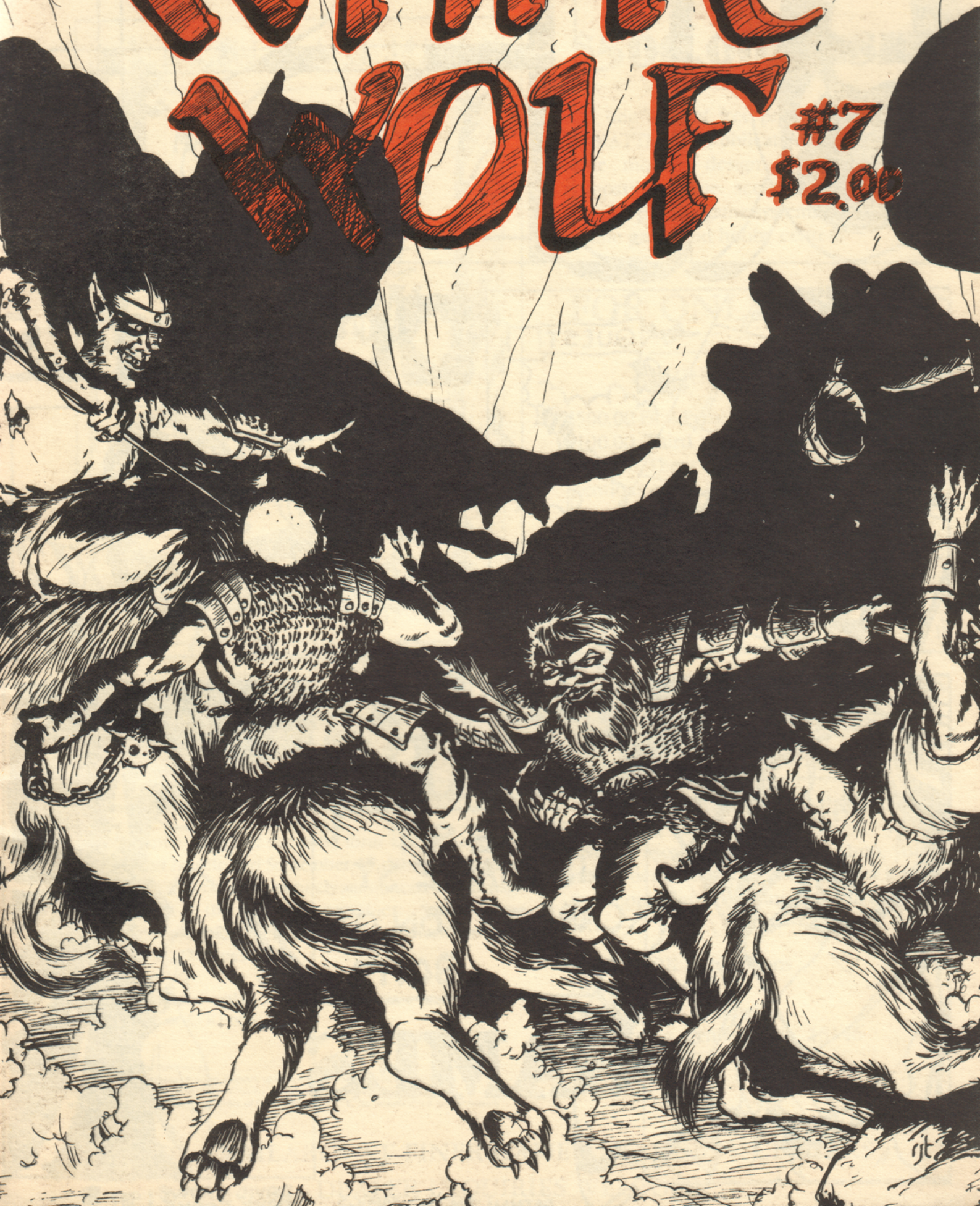
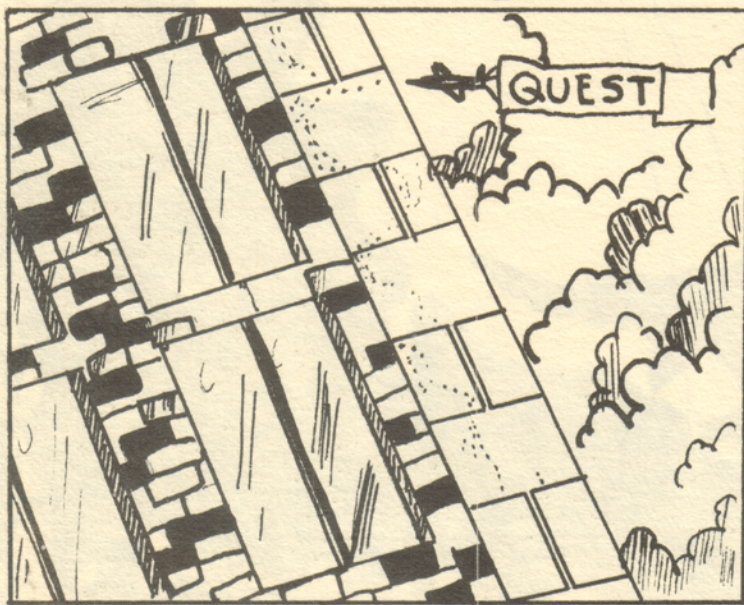


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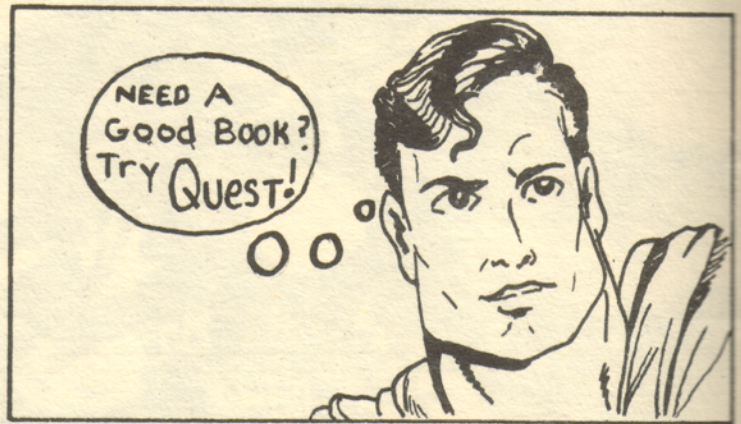
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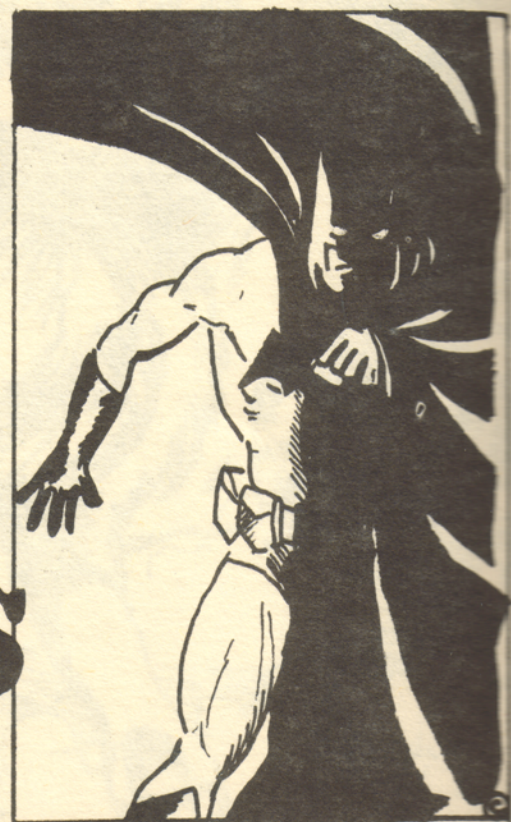
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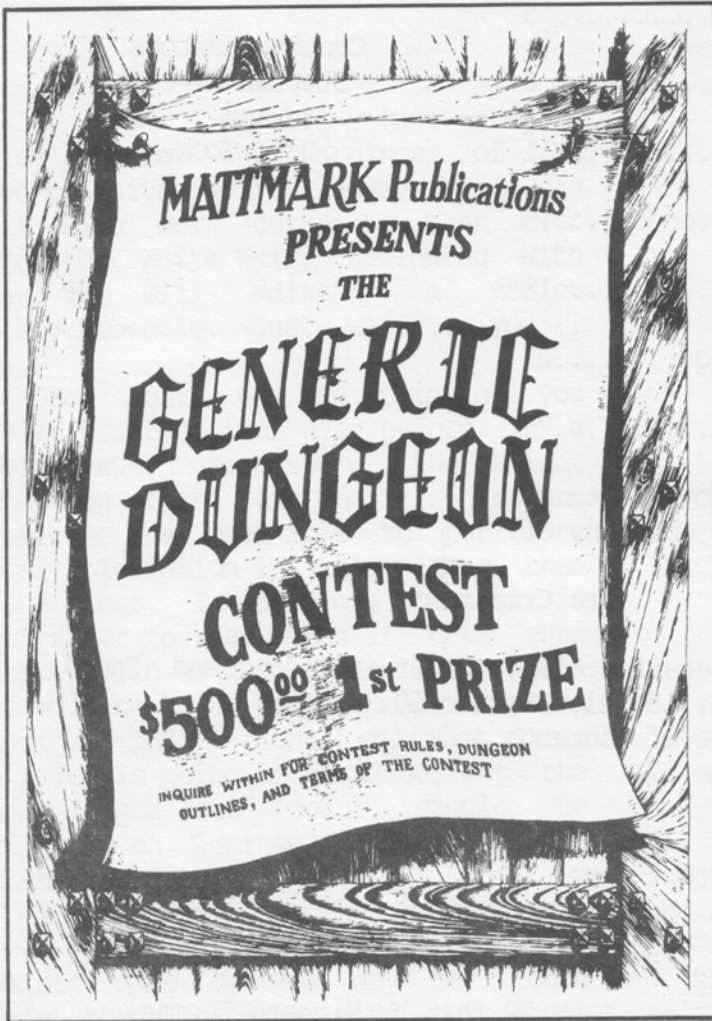
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

RUNES.....	1	** STAFF **
by Stewart Wieck		
Lucky Stone.....	2	Editor-in-Chief
by S. William Nesbitt		Stewart Wieck
Review Information.....	5	Contrib. Editors
by Stewart Wieck		Stephan Wieck
Review: Battletech.....	6	and
by Stephan Wieck		Dale Cook
Review: Pendragon.....	11	
by Stewart Wieck		
Review: Price of Freedom....	15	
by Stewart Wieck		
Review: Psi-World.....	18	
by Stewart Wieck		
TRCofP: The Meeting.....	21	
by Dale Cook		
Skills fo Sale.....	24	
by Thomas Kane		
Author Spt: H.P. Lovecraft..	28	
by William Wilson Goodson, Jr.		

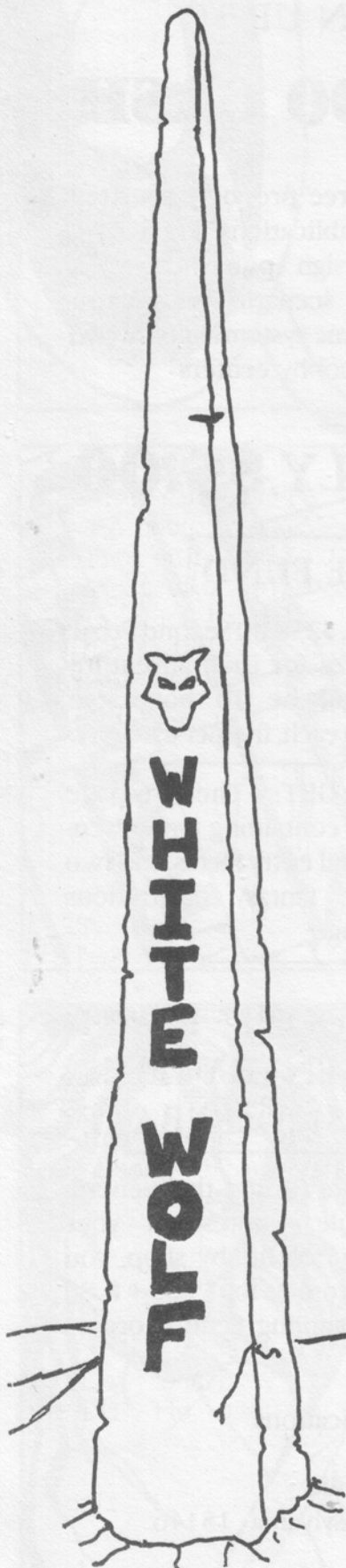
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Index to Advertisers

1. Quest: inside front cover
2. MATTMARK: first magazine page.
3. DRAGON CON '87: page 23.
4. MATTMARK: page 27.
5. White Wolf Magazine: page 30 (art by Richard Thomas).
6. K Society: inside back cover.
7. Chattanooga Magic and Fun: back cover.

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RUNES

- STEWART WIECK -

I find myself once again apologizing for the tardiness of an issue of White Wolf. However, I can state with more certainty than ever before that White Wolf, beginning with issue #8, will maintain a strict monthly schedule. Just wait... you'll see...

Once again we are bringing you more information than ever before in a single issue. Because of the slight compaction of the text and a two column format, we have been able to put more useful information in this issue than in any other. In addition, the text is much easier to read. But it gets even better. Join us next issue when White Wolf will be a 48 page, color covered magazine. That's right. COLOR! Sure, the price is going up to \$2.50, but the extra length and color should be sufficient an improve to warrant the increase.

I would now like the welcome you to our review issue. Reviews of four separate game systems may be found within these pages. Find out about Battletech, Pendragon, The Price of Freedom, and Psi-World. (Hawkmoon didn't make it for this issue, but that review will show up eventually). And this isn't all there is. The Royal City of Pendrane continues (it's set to conclude in issue #10) and another piece a fiction titled "Lucky Stone" also appears. The latter was recieved by us quite some time ago and I am glad to have finally fit it in somewhere. Our series of Author Spotlights also continues. This month we welcome William Wilson Goodson, Jr. back to inform us about H.P. Lovecraft (see issue #5 in which he wrote about Fritz Leiber). In addition to all of this (see, I told you there was a lot in this issue), we also welcome the return of Thomas Kane to these pages. His article should help penniless adventurers get out of trouble.

I would like to briefly touch upon the topic of advertisers in White Wolf. The honest truth of the matter is that without advertisers a magazine cannot survive. So far we have kept the number of advertisers in White Wolf to a minimum, but the ones we have are ones that we don't want to lose. There are a couple new faces in this issue.

Write to both these new folks and the familiar faces and support them. I speak from personal experience when I say that there are friendly people at these places. If nothing else write for a catalog or inquire about their future publications (best of all, though, buy their merchandise). But whatever you do, let them know where you found out about them. Yea, in White Wolf.

So, until next time...

COMING IN ISSUE #8

1. The feature of this issue is an FRP adventure called "The Grove of Heroes". This scenario is the first of a two part series, but may stand on its own.
2. Another major article in this issue will deal with "Combat Rating". This system offers a new way to determine chances to hit in combat in FRP games.
3. The Author Spotlight next month is an important one. J.R.R. Tolkein is highlighted in what will be a ground breaking issue.
4. "The Royal City of Pendrane" will continue from where it left off this issue. You'll read about how...
5. Some new magic spells will also make an appearance.
6. And more... you'll have to wait and see. Be waiting for that color cover!



Lucky Stone

by S. William Nesbitt II

The cold, cruel winds winds blew off Lake Wellega and fought through the collar and seams of Pedlo's jacket. Lake Wellega was icy and bitter this time of year and it was no time for a man to be caught without shelter. So, how did Pedlo let this happen to him? He was from Frumdoig, where the southern latitudes and warm sea breezes combine for a mild winter where even the drifters can enjoy January. Greed and short cuts led him to this city, for the city of Wellega was a big, thriving metropolis in which magic was commonplace and comforts were easy to find. A carpet cruised by and Pedlo looked up at the towering edifices which housed the lucky and the affluent.

He shoved his fist into his pocket and had to reach down deep to pull out a single gold coin and a silver piece. He began to calculate the permutations his life savings could get him: a coat and a loaf of bread; two bottles of brandy and a cigar; one bottle of vodka, a hunk of cheese, and two loaves of bread.

He rubbed his bristly beard and looked across the street. Dancing lights and well lit signs reminded him of one other choice. He could double, triple, quadruple, or even quintuple his money at a casino with one roll of the dice. His heart sank. Gambling is what put him on the street and into the cold.

Someone grabbed his arm and spun him around. Pedlo eyed the man. He was tall and thin; his eyes were sunk deep in shadow and his features stood out prominently in the flashing lights. The man had dark hair and a thin moustache and goatee. He smiled weakly at Pedlo with grey teeth and said, "Hello, friend."

Pedlo dusted off his jacket and said, "Ey, watch the threads, man."

"But of course," the man said, still smiling. He wore a full length sable coat of excellent quality. It shimmered in the sparkling light, but his eyes, dark and hidden, failed to

catch that light and they remained hidden from Pedlo. "It is a very cold night to sleep out alone."

Pedlo looked at him, trying to guess the game. Pedlo lacked any ability as a poker player, and was further hampered by the dark shadow cast upon the stranger's eyes. Suddenly, Pedlo showed a look of realization and stepped back from the man. "I ain't no pervert or nothin' man so you can forget it."

The man laughed hoarsely and softly. "I want to sell you an item that may change the rest of your life."

Pedlo clutched his two coins which were now cold because of the surrounding weather. Pedlo knew he couldn't afford whatever it was, but would allow the man his pitch. "What is it?"

The man reached into his coat pocket and pulled out a fine square of leather. He carefully unfolded the leather to expose a coin sized gem that sparkled in the night. Pedlo stepped close to the stranger to admire it. It made the casino lights look dull and artificial and it flickered with such incredible beauty that he immediately lusted for it.

"That's some rock, buddy," Pedlo muttered. He quickly considered knocking the man over and stealing the gem, but he saw a scabbard poking from the sable coat. Pedlo backed off shuddering. That man, if it were possible, was colder than Lake Wellega.

"Why you sellin' it?" Pedlo asked.

The stranger didn't seem to hear Pedlo but told him, "The best part about this gem is that which you cannot see." Then he paused before continuing in a slithering voice, "It's magic."

"Oh, yea?"

"When one holds this gem firmly in one's palm, one can win any... ANY gamble!"

Pedlo laughed, "Wanna trade it for my kobold's foot?" The stranger didn't laugh and Pedlo felt very uncomfortable. "How much?"

"Ten pieces of gold."

"Ten?!" Pedlo blurted. The stone

alone, magic or no, was worth a clean five hundred, maybe a thousand. Pedlo shrugged, "Sorry, buddy, can't do nothin for ya."

"OR," the stranger continued, "I'll rent it to you. One gold piece for 24 hours."

Pedlo raised an eyebrow. He cursed himself. Always the sucker. Then he thought, ---'Ey, I give this guy my gold piece, leave, and sell the gem. Easy enough.--- "I'll take it!" Pedlo said eagerly. Pedlo handed over his money and plucked the gem from the piece of leather. "Enjoy, my friend." Then, the stranger handed Pedlo a watch, pointed to its face and said, "Eleven fifty-four, right here. Tomorrow. Anything else is breach of contract. Agreed?"

Pedlo turned to leave but the stranger grabbed his arm. Again, he said, "Agreed?"

"Yea, sure buddy." The man nodded and smiled and Pedlo walked off muttering, "You meet a lot of creepy people in dis town." As he ran off, Pedlo heard the stranger murmur again, "Eleven fifty-four."

Pedlo felt that silver piece in his hand and looked at the casino. ---What could it hurt?--- he figured. He fought his way through the smoky crowd and the sounds of a Pamecian rock band pounded in his ears. "Ah, da lucky wheel," he said as he approached his favorite game: roulette (it takes so little skill). He slapped his silver piece down on number fourteen and grabbed that lucky stone, whispering, "Com'on 14!"

The ball and wheel spun against each other until the ball dropped down into number eight, but just as it settled into place, it popped up and fell neatly into... fourteen! Pedlo jumped with joy. It paid thirty-two to one.

However, the clerk suspected foul play. "Hey, fella, you know that magic's illegal in here?"

"Yea, sure. I don't got nothin' 'cept my lucky stone."

"Lemme see that!" the man

demanded, calling over the house mage. Pedlo held it out and the mage said a few words over it. He paused, scratched his head, and then pulled out a wand. The wizard waved the wand around the gem several times and then pronounced, "It's nothing but a pretty rock."

Pedlo collected his winnings. That stone was a bunch of garbage, he thought. ---I won this on my own!--- He intended to just collect his money and call it a night, but, as always, his greed got the best of him and he laid it all on the line. Gripping his stone, just in case, he muttered, "Com'on nine!"

The clerk read the wheel and announced "Another winner for the man with the lucky stone."

So, this was how Pedlo proceeded to clean out casino after casino along the famous Wellega Strip. Along the way he got a shave and a bath, new clothes, jewelery, and more than one woman. Finally, at 7:30 in the morning, he retired. He rented out the entire top floor of the Dancing Elf, providing rooms for his entourage of ladies, his newly acquired tailor, his barber, and a quick-witted gnome named Dan.

He awoke with the taste of old liquor in his mouth and a 'dame' on each side of his bed. He checked his watch (the one the stranger had given him). It was 9:25 the next evening. He stretched out and leaned back with both hands behind his head. "I'm going to blow this town. There's nothin' left here." He grinned when he saw the bags of gold piled in the corner. "Yep," he said, "I'm going back to Frundoig where life is easy." He began to laugh until tears came to his eyes, "Wait'll Breggie sees me."

He hopped out of bed and lit a cigar. He yelled loudly, "Alright girls, get ready, we're movin' out."

He stood on the roof of the Dancing Elf looking over the city. The wind whipped about him, but it couldn't reach him through his thick bearskin coat. Pedlo checked his watch. 11:50.

continued on page 26

by Stewart Wieck

On the following pages you will find reviews of the following games: Battletech, Pendragon, Price of Freedom, and Psi-World. These are not the first games which have been reviewed in the pages of White Wolf. Readers of long standing will remember the review of Jorune which appeared in issue #2. Look for occasional reviews in upcoming issues of White Wolf as well.

Starting with the reviews in this issue, each game will be rated on a scale of 1-10 in five different categories (with 10 being the best). Often, if such is available, any game supplements for the game in question (adventure modules, rules expansions, etc.) will also be rated. These, however, will just receive a ranking in one category. Following is a list of the categories and a brief description of each.

1) "APPEARANCE": This applies not only to the artwork but to the format and design as well. Artwork, and physical attractiveness, though, are the major considerations here.

2) "COMPONENTS": Read in full, this should say "Components for the price". This last is added to make this rating a bit more comprehensive and worthwhile. You would obviously expect more from a \$30 than you would a \$10 one. The way we have rated in this category gives you a proportional value. Six extra items with a \$10 price tag is much better than eight at \$30.

3) "PLAYABILITY": This does not rate the quality of a game, but rather "how playable is it?". Some games of high quality may rate low in this category because the game may not be especially suited to character play. Play may be difficult- you find it hard to feel at home within the confines of the game or the game might have a very relaxed atmosphere- one in which you feel comfortable playing a character.

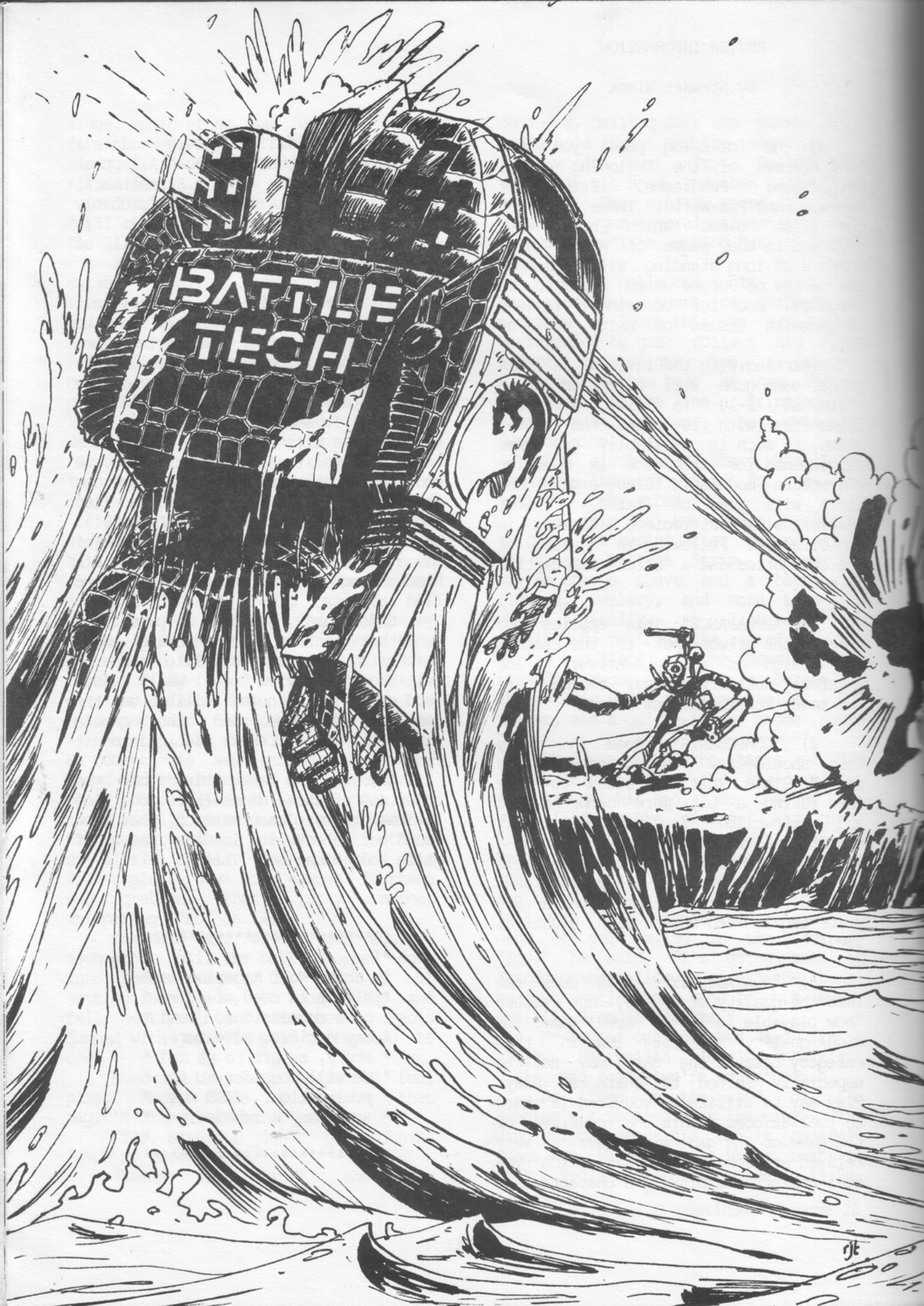
4) "COMPLEXITY": Very little explanation is needed here. All that is truly needed is a benchmark. Because most of you are probably familiar with AD&D, we will use it. It would rate COMPLEXITY 8 (9 if all of the rules were used).

5) "SUM": This is an overall rating. It is based partially on the results in the other categories, but probably not in whole. This is the only category in which any supplementary materials listed will be rated in. It should be mentioned here that when we first decided to publish some reviews (again, issue #2) we concluded that there wasn't a game on the market which would rate a '10' (thus Jorune's ranking of '9'). However, somewhere within the batch of games reviewed this issue is a '10'. Read through all of the reviews and find it.

Undoubtably, you have a particular game that you have been thinking about purchasing that you would like to see a well-thought review of. Well, just send us a little note telling us the name of the game and the game's publisher. We'll check look into it from there.

Oh, yes, one last thing. If you order any of these games that you find reviewed here, please mention that you found out about it in the pages of White Wolf Magazine. Thanks.

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Review: BATTLETECH GAME SYSTEM
by Stephan Wieck

Design: FASA Gang
Publisher: FASA Corporation
P.O. Box 6930
Chicago, IL 60680
Price: Battletech \$20
Citytech \$20
Aerotech \$15
Mechwarrior \$12

The Dark Ages have fallen upon mankind again. It is the 31st century. Instead of knights riding forth on chargers in plate armor though, the battlefield is dominated by awesome Battlemech robots piloted by Mechwarriors. Battlemechs range from "light" 10-20 ton scouts to megalithic 15 meter tall, 100 ton giants. Military tactics have changed, and totally new political structures and semi-religious institutions have arisen from a once unified interplanetary government. This is the world of Battletech.

Battletech is a complete gaming system published by FASA which is split up into four separate games: Battletech, Citytech, Aerotech, and Mechwarrior. Each individual game can stand alone, but work best when all four are combined to allow play in every facet of the Battletech universe. Battletech covers combat between Battlemechs on the open battlefield. Citytech covers 'mech combat in urban environments. Aerotech covers the space and atmospheric combat that is part of any Battletech military campaign, and Mechwarrior is the role-playing supplement for the system which covers personal combat and skills. All four games use the same system of combat so that after learning one, the other three are easily understood. The combat system is slightly modified to account for the obvious differences between man-to-man, mech-to-mech, and fighter-to-fighter combat.

One drawback of FASA's four-games-in-one system is the price. The entire system has a tidy price of \$67. However, this is really no different from the AD&D or D&D system and in fact costs less than either of those systems. And, if the true test of any game is its playability, then

Battletech is a good system. It is extremely easy to gamemaster and fun to play, at an hourly price that eventually beats the movies.

Lastly, before I expound upon each individual game, I would like to make a note for those who, like myself, started with Battledroids. Battletech (the game) is the second edition of Battledroids. Lucasfilms (the Star Wars people) contacted FASA and informed them that as far as Lucasfilms was concerned, they coined and owned the word "droid" and any use of it. Rather than go through legal lines to prove Lucasfilms wrong, FASA renamed its game 'Battletech'. And although Lucasfilms was probably being paranoid, I must wonder about the startling similarities that exist between many of the mechs in Battletech and robots of Robotech.

BATTLETECH: Battletech, the name of the system and one of its games, is definitely the first of the games to purchase if one is planning on getting the system or any of its parts. The game comes in a handsome box containing: a 48 page rulebook, 2 22"x17" identical mapsheets, 48 counters, sheets of markers, and 2 six sided dice. The maps are especially nice. They are heavy stock cardboard, and fold out nicely. The numbered hex maps label terrain, elevations and water depth. The reverse side of each map is also numbered and printed, though these sides are blank.

The rule book is well written, especially considering that Battletech is pretty much a war game. The rules are presented in three different chapters, each of which gets increasingly more complex as more rules are added. The first section, Battlemech Training introduces players to the sequence of play, movement, and combat. After reading this section, players can get hands on experience playing two simplified mechs using only the rules given in Battlemech Training. The next section, Advanced Gunnery, introduces critical hits, better

line-of-sight rules, and cover. The third section, Expert Battlance, provides rules for physical attacks so that mechs can not only blaze away at each other, but can also punch, kick, push, charge, and jump on top of one another. Finally, optional rules on fire hazards and using torn off 'mech limbs as clubs are given along with instructions for creating new Battlemech machines. 14 mechs are listed in the rulebook and counters are included in the set for them.

The Battletech system is easy to learn; only two six sided dice are needed for any roll. Each side rolls initiative. The loser moves his mech, then the winner. Movement includes walking, running, and jumping. Then each mech can turn its torso one hexside to try to get their opponents in line-of-sight (if necessary). Each declares weapon fire and intended target (important if there are many mechs on the field), then both blast away simultaneously. After weapon combat, physical attacks are performed. Finally, damage is assessed and heat build-up recorded. Damage is marked off the armor plating of the mech on the region where the damage landed (head, left leg, etc.). If a region's armor is destroyed, the internal structure of that area is damaged and critical hits may occur (like cockpit explosion). Also, all mechs generate heat during operation which is released through vents called heat sinks. Often however, a mech will build up more heat than it can dissipate through its heat sinks. Heat build-up is recorded and penalties occur at different heat levels such as engine shutdown and ammunition explosion.

Once the rules are learned, the game flows quite smoothly. The rules seem to cover almost any possible battlefield action. The largest problem with the rules is in initiative. The winner of initiative is often able to move out of an opponents field of fire after his opponent moves and take free shots at the poor losing side. Torso shifts help alleviate this problem,

but fast, light mechs still cause it to happen. If a simultaneous movement system such as in Star Fleet Battles could be used, the game would improve a lot. Then, a successful flank would depend on skill and not on the roll of the dice for initiative.

CITYTECH: Citytech is largely a mirror image of Battletech except that it details urban combat instead of wilderness settings. The set includes 2 22"x17" hexmaps of city areas, a 48 page rulebook, 2 six sided dice, and sheets of counters and markers (sound familiar?).

Citytech's main problem is that it is essentially just a supplement to Battletech, and \$20 is expensive for a supplement. Of the 48 pages in Citytech's rulebook, 26 are spent rehashing Battletech rules and only the remaining 22 provide new material. However, those 22 pages are very important.

Citytech lists 6 new mechs and 6 vehicles, and it gives rules for creating and using armored vehicles, infantry, fortifications, and a couple new weapons. And, of course, it provides rules for urban combat. The rules explain how to handle mechs walking through, blasting, and pounding buildings. They also explain how much cover different types of buildings provide for those inside, and how much weight a building will support (a 50 ton mech stepping on a light building will crash down through every level until it reaches the ground or basement). Rules are also given for skidding on cement if a mech is running and turns quickly.

Citytech covers all other ground military units of the 31st century. PBI (or poor bloody infantry) are described. Infantry vary according to their armament from lasers to rifles to mortar-like short range missiles. Mechs in open field combat will slaughter the poor bloody infantry because mechs have superior range, firepower, and movement, but in a city infantry ambushes at close quarters are

deadly. Tanks, hovercraft, and wheeled vehicles also grace Citytech's environment. Some of these vehicles get pretty devastating like the Demolisher, an 80 ton mech mauling monster on tracks. Citytech also provides numerous counters for buildings, vehicles, new mechs, and also a few infantry counters.

The interior art of Citytech is rather poor, but the cover art done by Jim Holloway is very good. And, the counters and maps are of very high quality.

AEROTECH: In the Battletech universe, hyperspace travel can only occur around a solar system's star. Therefore, large jumpships carry dropships through hyperspace, then the dropships, laden with mechs and aerospace fighters, cruise out into the solar system to assault an enemy held planet. The dropship literally drops mechs from the outer atmosphere and the mechs use leg jets to cushion their touchdown. After touchdown, the land assault begins. However, if the dropship never makes it to the planet, or if the mechs are blown apart during their drop the attack flops, thanks to defending aerotech fighters.

If players want to run an entire Battletech military campaign, then Aerotech is essential. Space combat, pre-landing, and air support for ground forces are all integral parts of Battletech military excursions. Aerotech covers almost every aspect of fighter and dropship combat.

The set comes with a 22"x34" hex mapsheet, counters, 2 six sided dice, and a 40 page rulebook. The box is very attractive, and the rulebook art is adequate to very good.

The rules follow Battletech in sequence and usage going from initiative, to movement, combat, and heat build-up. The rules concentrate on spacial combat between craft. I have played several different space combat games, and aerotech is one of the better ones. Players keep track of their fighter's velocity from turn to turn on the

fighter's record sheet. The faster a craft is moving, the more thrust (movement) points it must expend to change direction per each hexside turn. Thrust points are also used to accelerate or decelerate.

One extra consideration of Aerotech fighter piloting is gravity. Since most combat takes place around a besieged planet, gravitational pull of the planet and the surrounding moons is accounted. Vector arrows that are printed onto the map sheet show the relative strength of gravity in each hex. If a fighter's velocity does not exceed the vector's number, the craft may be turned or moved towards the planet.

Aerotech also gives rules for atmospheric entry, landing, and some rules for aerial (atmospheric) combat between fighters. However, the rules for aerial combat are rather sparse. FASA's catalogue lists that their TOP GUN boardgame ties in with the Battletech system by providing rules for atmospheric fighter combat. So, the lucky consumer gets to purchase yet another game. The rules provided, however, are sufficient for basic maneuvers and cover strafing and divebombing attacks. These actions are the ones that mainly affect mech combat.

Aerotech is cursed with charts. Almost every page of the rulebook has one or more charts on it. Playing gets bogged down by chart rolling, especially if fighters are ducking in and out of the atmosphere. Luckily, all the charts use two dice six rolls when consulting them, and I will admit that every chart is essential to realistic play of the game.

It is disappointing to find that Aerotech fighters are actually much more powerful than mechs. A mech's biggest weapon is an Autocannon that delivers 20 points of damage, while an Aerotech fighter can divebomb mechs and release 100 point damage bombs. Aerotech strafing attacks are also hell for enemy mechs. Plus, as a general rule, Aerotech fighters are more

heavily armed than mechs of equal weight. The player is left to wonder if mechs are needed at all when a group of Aerotech fighters are more devastating.

Finally, Aerotech presents stats for: the three types of dropships of the Battletech universe, six Aerotech fighters (with rules to create your own), and three Land-Air Mechs. Land-Air Mechs, or LAMs are mechs that transform (an appropriate verb) from 'mechs to Aerotech fighters, and also to a half and half stage in between the two called an Air mech. It is my personal opinion the transforming robots belong in the cartoons and not in the gutsy world of Battletech. It is true that to play the game one must suspend disbelief much as in any fantasy setting, but the rest of the Battletech universe except for LAMs, is very logical and somewhat engineeringly sound. LAMs belong in another game, by Palladium.

A couple more things need to be said about these 'tech sets. All three rulebooks contain several pages of reference sheets to keep track of damage to 'mechs, vehicles, infantry, fighters, and dropships. The sheets have boxes to keep track of the armor lost in different locations, and a heat scale to mark heat level on. Also, each rulebook has its charts printed on the back cover for easy reference. Finally, the rulebooks contain many examples to help explain more complicated rules.

MECHWARRIOR: Mechwarrior is the role-playing segment of the Battletech system. It is a single 144 page trade size book. The book contains a 16 page section of full color plates that depict various mechs, vehicles, equipment, and military uniforms. These plates and the cover art are excellent and the remaining black and white interior graphics are average.

Mechwarrior presents extensive history and background for the Battletech universe, unfortunately, the

the game itself is not as good as the history. The first rules govern the creation of a character military unit. Characters are created by expending Character Points (CPs) for attributes, skills, handedness, inborn bonuses like sixth sense, and can also be spent to improve the chances of the beginning mechwarrior getting a heavier Battlemech. Similarly, a character can get more CPs for lowering starting attribute levels, taking inborn penalties, and decreasing his chance at a good 'mech. After generating characters, players go on to flesh out their unit by determining what other equipment they possess.

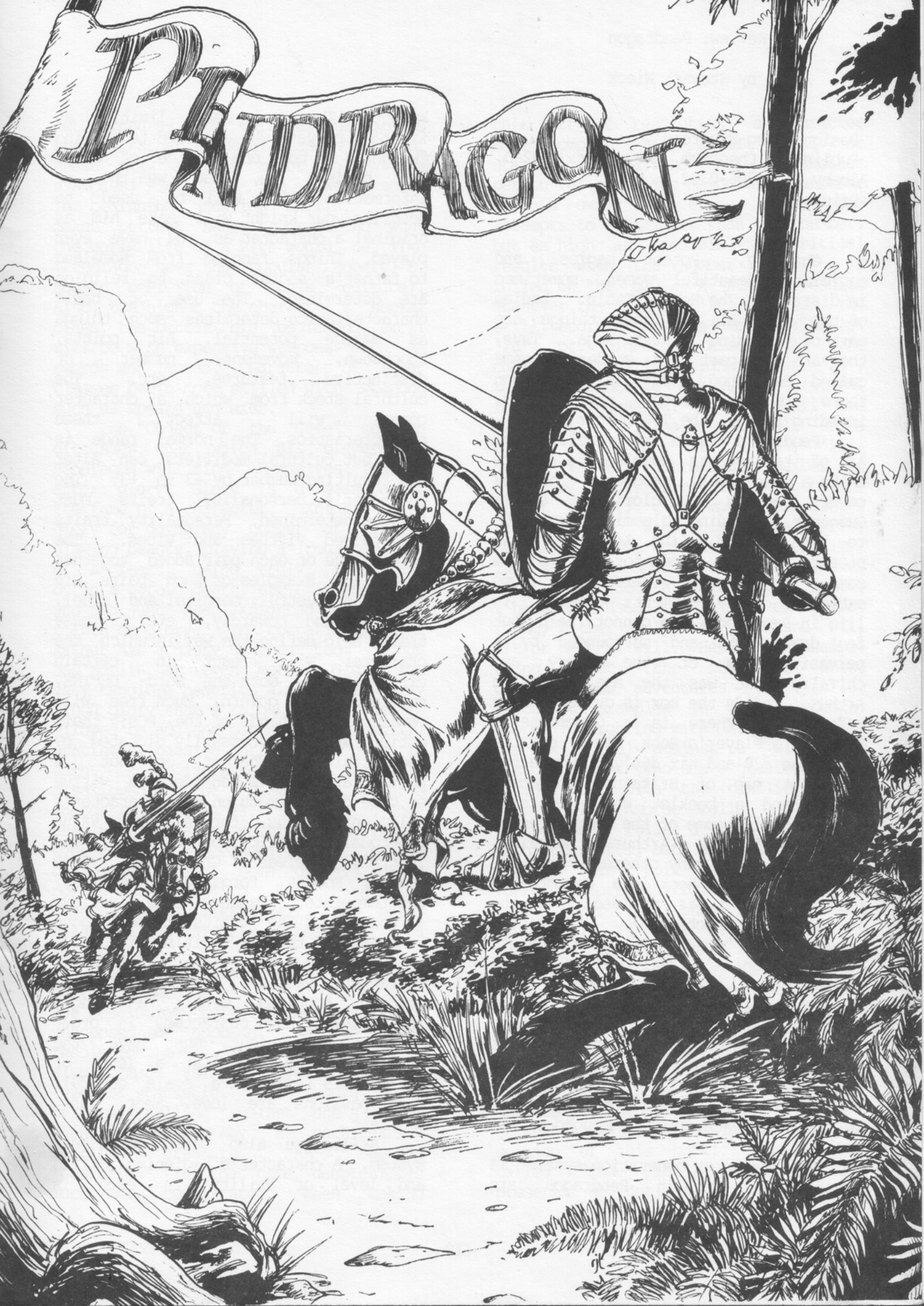
The problem with Mechwarrior's system lies in the fact that the same 2 d6 are still used for all rolls. This means that even a one point change in a skill level gives a character a hefty bonus, so the system is geared to suit this. Advancement is very slow, and purchases of beginning abilities are so expensive that beginning characters are not very different from one another in stats. FASA should have branched out from the use of only two six sideds for the role-playing supplement.

Combat is similar to Battletech in sequence. Damage in mechwarrior is brutal. Critical hits are easy to come by, so that in this game when a character is shot, they actually hurt instead of shrug off a few damage points or hit points. The rules mention that brawling does non-lethal damage, but then never explains the difference between lethal and non-lethal damage.

The rules also provide information on new mechs (though no counters are provided for them inside the book), artillery attacks, anti-mech defenses, and how mechwarrior skills change Battletech combat.

The best part of Mechwarrior is the background it provides. History from 2001 to Battletech century is given. Extensive information about the five Successor States that control most of the star systems is given. Information is also given on Comstar (a religious

continued on page 26



by Stewart Wieck

Design: Greg Stafford
Publisher: Chaosium, Inc., Box 6302-D,
Albany CA 94706-0302
Price: \$22

Chivalry. Potent magics and magicians. Beautiful women, sometimes in distresses. The Round Table. Ladies of the Lake. All of these things are part of the King Arthur saga. Thus, they are also part of a wonderful game called Pendragon. But in Pendragon there are also bloody civil wars, invading Saxons, the Troit Boar...

Pendragon is a very well game. All of its aspects combine to create quite a sensational product. The box cover depicts a glorious scene: Guenever is handing gleaming Excalibur to her husband, King Arthur. This picture sets the mood for the entire game, for though there are some extremely seedy elements present in life in Pendragon, one cannot help but feel drawn into and surrounded by a pervasive aura of the glory and chivalry that was the age of King Arthur. Inside the box is quite a load of material. There is a Gamemaster's Book and a Player's Book, seven durable dice (one d20 and six d6s), a wonderful fold out map of Britain, character sheets, and a booklet which contains statistics for some of the more famous Arthurian figures (Arthur, Lancelot, and Merlin among many others).

The Player's Book is a mammoth 88 pages long. It is divided into the following sections: "Character Generation", "Object of the Game", "Game Mechanics", "Personality Traits and Passions", "Skills", "Combat", "The Knight's World", and "The Family". The rules are presented in an enjoyable, coherent fashion. Wonderful bits of extra information about such things as coat-of-arms, courtly romance, and ransoms may be found along the side margins on each page throughout the book.

The character generation system is superb. All PCs in Pendragon are

knights. This may seem limiting at first to players who are used to having "knights" be but one choice of many, but believe me, the wealth of information which will be used to describe your knight will make him as original a character as you have ever played. Things ranging from homeland to father's social class to religion are determined. The use of basic characteristics determines such things as damage potential, hit points, knockdown, movement, number of distinctive features, etc. The cultural stock from which a character comes will affect these characteristics. The normal range is 3-18, but cultural modifiers can alter the resulting number by -3 to +3. The character's personality traits must also be determined. Personality traits are paired virtues and vices. The total value of each pair added together equals 20. Examples of such pairs are chaste and lustful, merciful and cruel, valorous and cowardly, etc. These traits help define the way in which the character will react in certain circumstances. Note the word- DEFINE, not regulate or govern. Much free will remains in the hands of the PCs; their actions are not necessarily dictated by the traits. Whether or not a particular trait is considered a virtue or vice depends much on the character's religion. Pagans, for example, value generous, energetic, honest, proud, and lustful, whereas Christians value chaste, modest, forgiving, merciful, and temperate. Pagans, then, receive +3 to each of the traits listed above (and thus -3 to that trait's pair).

Passions, too, help define a character. Passions are described as "strong emotions within a single individual". Each character, in order to become a knight, must have the passion Loyalty (Liege) at a level of at least 15 (again on a scale of 20). Other passions are love, amor, hate, and fear.

Skills are also based on a d20 system. A character's beginning skills and level of ability in each is

determined by his cultural background and his father's social class. Both of these play a very major role. As examples, Picts have the lowest score in beginning jousting skills. This makes perfect sense considering what the early life of a Pict would be like (Pendragon uses the popular Robert E. Howard depiction of this culture). Also, the higher the character's social class, the better his beginning skill will be with expensive weapons such as swords and lances. Characters of lower classes begin more skilled with weapons such as spears and axes.

The "Object of the Game" section discusses that which all players of Pendragon will find themselves lusting after: glory. Glory is a measure of the fame of a character. Knights gain glory for doing any number of things: slaying beasts, playing a rousing tune at a feast, being truly religious, dying a heroic death, etc. A character who has just been knighted gains 100 points of glory. In comparison, King Arthur has a glory upwards from 35,000 and Merlin has even more! Glory has very tangible benefits also. For every 1,000 glory that a knight gains, he is allowed to add one point to any skill, statistic, passion, or trait, even if such an increase is normally disallowed. For example, Arthur's energetic trait is 23. This is higher than the normally possible 20 (which even then is tremendous). Arthur has obviously 'spent' some of his extra points to add to his energetic. (Lancelot fans, like myself, take note: this fabulous knight's lance skill is 40!)

The game system is based upon two different methods of utilizing the d20. The resolution roll is either called unopposed or opposed. An unopposed resolution means that the roll is simply made vs. a character's skill level or statistic. This would mean, perhaps, rolling against one's valor when confronted by a particularly horrible creature. An opposed resolution (as the name denotes) is much more complicated. When making

this sort of resolution, a character must compare his skill level or statistic or trait to that of another person (or sometimes maybe even another of his own). In either case, one attempts to roll lower than his number, but as high as possible. A critical results when the number itself is rolled on the d20. A fumble results whenever the roll is '20', unless the skill, etc. in question has a value of '20' or higher. Also, if the character's skill is higher than '20', then his chance to achieve a critical result is increased. If the skill was '25', then a critical would result on a roll of '15', '16', '17', '18', '19', or '20' (merely subtract the number in excess of twenty from twenty to get the lowest number). Remember Lancelot's skill of '40' with his lance. Yes, that's right- he critical's everytime! The use of the opposed resolution makes for the most accurate FRP combat system I have ever used. In any given combat round, either only one opponent will hit or neither will. Here's an example using Ambrut, the character whose creation and adventures you follow throughout examples in the rulebooks: Ambrut is fighting with his sword (he has skill 10) against a similarly armed opponent (who has a greater skill of 13); to resolve the conflict, each rolls a d20. Ambrut rolls a '9' and the opponent rolls a '3'. They are both successful, but only Ambrut hits because his roll is higher and therefore more skillful. If both had failed their rolls, then neither would have hit. If their rolls had been successful but tied, then the opponent would have hit because his skill is greater. This system makes more sense than using one wherein each side gets their turn to strike.

The Gamemaster's Book is much shorter (only 16 pages). It includes statistics for some Pendragon creatures (giants, elves, unicorns, and even the Questing Beast). The most important section of this book, however, is called "The Plot". This section presents an outline of the entire

Arthurian Age and it is the most innovative feature of this game. The players (under the guidance of the GM of course) will participate in adventures during the entire reign of Arthur. In fact, they begin even before Arthur is Pendragon. "The Plot" section breaks the campaign into five phases: 1) Anarchy, 2) Unification, 3) Consolidation, 4) Apogee, and 5) Downfall. Throughout the 75 years represented by these phases customs will change and new things will become available (better types of armor, for example). Because of the amount of time involved in the passage of these phases, there is no way in which a player's original character will still be in his full knightly bloom. For this reason is the section "The Family" presented in the Player's Book. By the time the 5th phase is underway, a player will probably be playing the role of the grandchild of his first character (this is why players are happy to discover that, at least to some degree, glory is inheritable). These phases provide a framework, that of legendary era, with which the GM may develop his campaign. Time passes fairly rapidly because usually only one adventure will take place in any given year and the characters will, for the most part, be inactive during each winter, for there are no wars fought then and there ARE families to be raised...

There are a few minor problems in the rules (most of which are sorted out in later supplements) and it is sometimes difficult to locate information within the text of the rules, but Pendragon is as perfect a game as I have ever played. It is obviously a labor of love. Designer Greg Stafford is obviously well versed in the Arthurian legends. He does not merely retell these legends. He takes the initiative and offers some of his own insights and interpretations. Mr. Stafford has, more than anything else, created a game in which the player is primary. "Pretending to be a knight," he writes, "in the world of King Arthur

stimulates the mind, imagination, and psyche of every participant..." This is true, but would not be possible without the innovative and carefully created game system which is Pendragon.

RATINGS:

APPEARANCE: 9
 COMPONENTS: 8
 PLAYABILITY: 10
 COMPLEXITY: 6
 SUM: 10

SUPPLEMENT RATINGS

- 1) KING ARTHUR COMPANION- (this is unavailable so was not rated, but from the knowledge of what it contains it is recommended for any who want precise accuracy in their campaigns)--- ???
- 2) THE PENDRAGON CAMPAIGN (an excellent first supplement that contains a campaign overview and several short, first phase adventures)--- 9
- 3) THE NOBLES BOOK (To be honest, Pendragon is not complete without this book. It contains much needed information about owning and governing land, presents new large scale combat and glory rules, etc.)--- 10
- 4) THE GREY KNIGHT (A truly marvelous adventure by Larry DiTillio that utilizes the Pendragon system to its fullest.)--- 10

 * * * * *
 * White Wolf #8 will *
 * not be available *
 * until June of this *
 * year. When it does *
 * come, though, it *
 * will sport a full *
 * color cover and a *
 * typeset interior. *
 * In any event, it *
 * will be well worth *
 * the wait. New sub- *
 * scripion rates *
 * may be found on *
 * page 30 of this *
 * issue. Sign up now *
 * so you don't miss *
 * out on this event. *



THE
RICK
OF
FREEDON

rst

Review: The Price of Freedom

by Stewart Wieck

Design: Greg Costikyan
Publisher: West End Games, 251 West
30th St., New York, NY 10001
Price: \$19.95

"A gutless President has been elected. America has signed international agreements prohibiting 'Star Wars' defenses. The Soviet Union has developed a shield against nuclear attack. The Soviet Premier demands American surrender. The President complies. Soviet troops are landing your home town. In this, its darkest hour, America needs heroes. Are you willing to pay... The Price of Freedom?"

West End Games presents such a concise, encompassing introduction to The Price of Freedom (hereafter TPF), that it seemed unnecessary to write my own. In TPF, the players take on the roles of American freedom fighters who are struggling to make the Soviet occupation of America too costly to continue. The characters must keep the morale of fellow Americans high, fight guerilla conflicts, and try not to be captured (or killed) by Soviet troops.

With TPF, West End continues a line of excellent RPGs. To produce TPF, West End combined their greatest strengths: the ability to create an 'atmosphere' in an RPG and their tactical expertise (evident in their many wargames). The background of TPF is well thought out and every attempt has been made to help players develop their characters. This is combined with a very realistic combat system. In fact, the components are evidence of the combination of these two elements. The rules are very orderly arranged into different sections (nothing, though, so complicated as the old SPI rules). Counters and a counter tray are included along with a pair of hexagonal maps on which the counters may be used. There are also six well developed characters ready for use in an introductory adventure. The most

pleasing aspect of the physical make-up of the game, however, is that the box is way too large for the materials with which the game comes. This is good though, because now there is ample space to put supplements, character sheets and personal notes in the box.

The rules are divided into two separate books (as many are these days). The shorter Player Book contains all of the basic information concerning the game (including character creation, combat, hero points, etc.) and two very interesting essays titled "Know Your Enemy" and "Waging Guerilla Warfare". The Gamemaster Book supplies more information about the basic concepts (a whole lot more about combat), a sample adventure called "The PATH of Freedom", and other things. In these rules, West End coins several phrases that are likely to become staples throughout the RPG community. These phrases are quite useful to me, for now I know what to call several devices which I have made use of in the past. My favorite is "The Illusion of Choice". This is a tactic to use when the players are slightly off the course of your adventure and (instead of forcing them) you 'nudge' them back into the swing of things. Others are "adventure hooks" (several of which are included in the Gamemaster Book) and "avatar role-playing". "Adventure hooks" are short descriptions of adventures that can easily be expanded into a complete adventure. "Avatar role-playing" is, basically, playing yourself as a character. In TPF this is presented merely as a possibility.

Character creation (avatar or otherwise) is a very simple, yet productive process. The system is easy to use and the end result can truly be called a character; he's more than a cardboard cut-out. It is stressed that you should mentally picture your character before you begin. I feel that this should be done with any character in any campaign, but it is noteworthy that West End takes the time (and space) to discuss it in the rules.

Characters are described mainly by what are called "tags" (a descriptive word or phrase). Each character has a physical tag and a personality tag. A physical tag is that feature which would be first noticed by someone observing the character. Examples are: fat, long hair, wears suspenders, etc. A personality tag describes that quality of the character that most impresses someone he meets for the first time. Examples here would be: slothful, selfish, fanatic, modest, etc. To further round out the character, a passion (that which is most important to him) and interests (less important than passions) must be chosen. Then, more common things must be determined (ie. race, nationality, religion, education, etc.). In any event, the end result is a very developed character who, if the job was done right, should be enjoyable to role-play.

All resolution rolls in TPF use a d20. Such resolution rolls, as is usually the case, are made most often with respect to skills use and combat. Skills are divided into five categories: combat, eg. bows, indirect fire weapons; communication, eg. bargain, cryptology, sketching; craft, eg. demolitions, gunsmithing, electronics; education, eg. biology, medicine, physics; survival, eg. drug lore, fishing, swimming. Subject to some rules (the most important of which is no skill can be greater than 14 in the beginning), players have 150 points to divide among their beginning skills.

The combat section is very extensive. It covers everything from lines of fire to barbed wire and night operations to white phosphorus grenades. There are two battle scenarios included to help one grasp this extensive, but actually rather simple, combat system. Combat is broken down into six segments. These are as follows: 1) Panic Segment (during which some "despicable Commie oppressors and their quisling lapdogs" might flee in terror), 2) Observation Segment, 3) NPC Decision Segment, 4)

Player Decision Segment, 5) Combat Resolution Segment, and 6) Movement Segment. In segment four, each player decides which of a list of "actions" he will perform. Depending upon the nature of the chosen action, the character will complete the action in either segment five or six. Actions include everything from melee to firing a weapon to unjamming a weapon. Movement is governed by "movement points", which, as in many wargames, must be spent according to the terrain over which the character is moving.

TPF also makes use of hero points. Here, as in other systems that make use of hero points, the expenditure of said points allows a character to do something spectacular. Examples here are: dodging a bullet, making a heroic effort, and taking two actions (instead of the normally allotted one). Unlike other games, though, a character becomes fatigued after spending a hero point. This, I feel, is superior to the uses of hero points in most other games where the result occurs because the character was 'lucky'. In TPF, it is truly an impressive, exhausting, and spectacular occurrence when a hero point is spent. A character begins with only one hero point. This alone should give an indication of how rare and wonderful these points are.

But, in a sense, TPF has too much. Much of the information given is useless to me. My campaigns tend to remain on small scales (with large scale effects, yes, but...), so much of the large scale military information would go unused by me. This, however, is merely a personal problem. Doubtless, some of the information which I find to be invaluable (the timelines that they offer, etc.) would be totally worthless to another who might find the military information a necessity. This, then, is to show you that there is most likely something for anyone in TPF. If you are a wargamer who has never been able to find an RPG that you were truly satisfied with, then you might try TPF. Even if you are an RPGer who already has established

continued on page 27

PSI - WORLD



by Stewart Wieck

Design: Del Carr and Cheron
Publisher: Fantasy Games Unlimited,
Box 1082, Gilbert, Arizona 85234-1082
Price: \$12

Gas is \$2 a gallon. Man has regular shuttle trips to satellite stations and lunar bases. Neither of these two facts, however, is as important as that which the title of the game suggests: psionic powers are developing in certain individuals.

The box which packages the Psi-World game is probably the most attractive of any games published by FGU. It is a beauty done by Bill Willingham (of Comico's ELEMENTAL fame) and Matt Wagner (famous for MAGE and GRENDL, both are also by Comico). The interior art throughout the rulebooks maintains your attention. These respectably done black-and-whites were drawn by Matt Wagner and Rich Rankin.

The game comes complete with all of the necessary components for only \$12, a price almost unheard of anymore for RPG. The dice are included (2 d6 and 2 d20), though the d20's are of rather low quality. Also included is a GameMaster's Screen. The screen is not of the highest quality either, but it is certainly useful for easy reference and it is nice that it is included at no additional cost. Another nice addition which seems to be a staple in all games by FGU is the inclusion of a Master Character Sheet (MCS). The MCS is very durable copy of the game's character sheet and is suitable for photocopying. In fact, FGU gives permission to copy the MCS, though the lack of such permission would probably not stop most folks. Add a rulebook and a book of adventures to this and you see that everything needed certainly is here.

The rules themselves are fairly short (being only 32 pages long), but it is the obvious intention of the authors to present only a framework of the Psi-World world. There is a separate booklet of 20 pages length

that contains more of a developed background. So, whereas the rulebook presents a framework which could stand alone for beginning play, the second book offers an explanation of the authors' own Psi-(w)orld. The second book also contains two separate scenarios. There is one for each of the two types of possible campaign variations (these will be discussed later in this review).

Psi-World seems to be concerned with the "whole character". This is to say that there is more to a character than his combat skills and his psi abilities. Among the most important facets of a character is his education. Not only does education determine how many years of formal education that a character has received, but, because of the former, it also governs the complexity of skills that a character may know. Education is the area in which non-psionics (Norms) generally gain their advantage over Psis. This is because Norms are able to continue further in a school system wherein the education of Psis is discouraged.

Skills in Psi-World are divided in two different ways. First, there are several different varieties of skills. These are: general, technical, military, spacer, and advanced/academic skills. The sort and extent of education that a character has received determines which of these areas of skills may be learned. For example, a character that has only received a general education may not become a lawyer or geologist. Skills are also defined as being "level skills" or "non-level skills". Level skills are those skills with which a character may have varying degrees of proficiency. All combat skills, for example, are level skills, as there are there are different levels of ability that one may have in unarmed combat, rifle shooting, etc. Non-level skills are those things which a character either can or cannot do. A person can either swim, or he can't. Other non-level skills include diving, rock climbing, and vacuum suit (a spacer skill). The

acquisition and use of skills is affected by a thing called Level of Difficulty (or LoD). High LoDs make a skill hard to learn and an action more difficult to perform, while low LoDs do just the opposite.

The combat system is based upon percentile rolls. The resolution of any combat action is very simple. Depending on the type of attack being used, different step-by-step outlines may be followed. The outlines are simple to use and are not the massive two page flow charts which add unnecessary complications to some games. The first step is to determine whether or not the attacker is skilled or unskilled in the type of attack he is about to perform. These attack types are unarmed (with throws, pins, chokes, and strikes all being possible choices), HTH with weapon, or projectile weapon. Obviously, an unskilled person has less a chance to succeed than a skilled one.

Other games might feature psionic abilities, but the entire premise of Psi-World is based upon them. As such, there had to be significant innovations, or at least expansions, relating to psionics and their use if the game were to stand out. Even if this game is unusable to a person in any other way, it could at least be used as a reference for use with other games.

Psionics in the game are divided into two classifications: major and minor powers. A Psi may choose to either have one major power or two minor powers. The list of major powers is as follows (all of the names are nouns describing the Psi who uses that power): Precog, Telepath, Teleport, Telekinetic, Self-Aware, Healer, and Empath. Each of these major disciplines has anywhere from six to fourteen lesser powers categorized under them. For example, an Empath has the following powers: Detect Emotion, Intensify Emotion, Create Emotion, Emotional Overload, Empathic Transfer, and Empathic Healing. The minor disciplines are generally more powerful

than any one of the lesser abilities under a major discipline. Examples of minor disciplines are: Shifter, Pyrokinetic, Mind Meld, Psi Blast, Null Psi, and other, permanent abilities such as Genius. Each of these minor disciplines is a power unto itself, and, though the choice of a major discipline generally makes for a more powerful character, I have found that the minor disciplines are more fun to work with. Therefore, it would seem as if there is a route for any type of player. The only thing which might destroy your interest in this game would be if you ever got worn out of the novelty of an entirely psionic based game. The game, however, has such room for expansion that I doubt that this would occur too soon. Even if the situation did arise, the rules are sufficient to handle almost any kind of campaign- spy, etc. Psis could then be used liberally to rekindle the interest which may have dulled.

Psi-World accurately describes what the world might be like in the near future. The authors suggest that the appearance of these extra-powered individuals has caused "society [to] fragment". Out of this one setting, though, two different types of campaigns are possible. Either the Psis are being hounded by a government that fears them and has created a force known as the Psi-Police (or "Psi-Pigs" in the vernacular of the Psis) to regulate and control them, or the government could be justified in bringing NPC Psis to justice. With this latter option, the Psis are deadly criminals who are using their powers for their own benefit and the PCs are Psi-Policemen out to stop them. The only significant lack in the game as far as background is the absence of materials or information expanding upon the use of space in this near future world. Perhaps someone reading this will write a supplement...

Thru and thru, Psi-World is an interesting and pleasing game. It is fairly simple, but does not achieve this by sacrificing either playability

continued on page 27

THE ROYAL CITY OF PENDRANE

Part Five: The Meeting

by Dale Cook

What has gone before:

Aarich Duclat, the first vampire to appear in over three hundred years, has purchased the services of one Roud Tutrek, Fencingmaster of the Royal City of Pendrane, and his henchman, Blackie, in the undertaking of a mysterious quest. Evidence of Duclat's nocturnal habits attracted the attention of Lysander, Arch-mage of Pendrane. Lysander ran to inform Roud of Duclat's true nature (which Duclat hadn't revealed to Roud) and to confront and hopefully destroy the vampire. Wendrom Sestur, Heirophant of the Cabal (the most powerful druid alive), finds Duclat and offers his assistance in the quest, for reasons he was just about to explain...

Aarich Duclat, relaxed and confident, sat among a heap of loosely arranged black velvet cushions. Wendrom Sestur, equally relaxed and confident, sat in the center of the floor in the lotus position. The room was almost completely dark except for a small lantern illuminating the entrance. The two had been engrossed in conversation here in Duclat's tent since their arrival at his camp.

Wendrom was enjoying asking questions about Duclat's background and life in general:

"So, Aarich, why did you choose this world over all the others? Surely a being such as yourself could find a place more suitable for vampires!"

Duclat was quick to reply. "Certainly, but, as you seem to know already, I did not come here to settle down. Although to settle among humans might be interesting. Many of you are so... delicately beautiful. And satisfying." he added with a bemused expression.

Wendrom now looked directly at Aarich as he spoke, his deep blue eyes flashing intently. "Allow me to press on to the purpose of the meeting, Aarich. I will say two things. One, I know that you seek to destroy the White Wands of Tegra-neh, or at least keep

*
* White Wolf Magazine is *
* always in need of a few *
* good submissions. Send *
* any article, adventure, *
* story, or art to us and *
* we will consider it for *
* publication. SASE must *
* accompany a submission. *
*

them hidden from those who seek to use them. Secondly, I will tell you that I would like to help you in your venture--if I may. Before you speak, I might remind you that even immortals need a little help once in a while."

The vampire waited a full minute before answering. "Very well," he began, choosing his words carefully, "but I have a question for you now. Why?"

"Because the scales of power have been tipped too long to one side. The creatures of darkness need a helping hand. After all, without evil, how does one know good?"

"Do you have anything specific in mind?"

"Of course." the druid replied, smiling.

* * * * *

Roud Tutrek looked over the rock outcropping he was hidden behind and reported, "They're still in his tent."

"Let's go on and bash his head in now!" Blackie suggested enthusiastically.

"NO!" Roud snapped.

"Roud's right, Blackie." said Lysander. "If we're going to destroy him, it has to be done carefully. He is a very powerful creature. This needs to be well-planned."

The three had gathered on a small hill overlooking the camp. Lysander had revealed to them the true nature of their employer, and stressed the need for the world to be rid of such a vile beast. The only problem which presented itself was that they simply could not decide how to go about killing him. Roud wanted to end it personally, but Lysander kept insisting that it would probably be in the interest of good health not to confront the vampire face to face.

"You just wait here," the arch-mage said finally in exasperation, "and I'll just be done with it and fry him to ashes."

With that, he got up and walked around to the open side of the hill. Gripping his staff with both hands, he began a long series of dramatic phrases, every now and then punctuating his chanting with spasmodic gestures. Had he not had an audience, he would have merely said the Word of Command and been done with it.

Finally, reaching the climax of his incantations, Lysander screamed "Shuldranabstrakeriliam!!!!" The word was nonsense, but it impressed Roud and Blackie.

The fist-sized blue sapphire set at the top of his staff flared with searing blue light. A ball of magical energy shot towards the tent in the middle of camp. Upon impact, it exploded into a huge mass of bluish flame with a tremendous roar.

"Hiieeeeaah!!" Blackie yelled as he leapt over the rocks and charged the remains of the camp. Roud and Lysander were right behind him, sword drawn and sapphire still glowing faintly.

They ran down until they stood at the threshold of what was left of the tent. Lysander strode forward and bent over the smoldering bones of the vampire.

"Well, that's him." began Roud. "Those are his rings and his necklace." he said, pointing to the still-glowing jewelry. Out of the corner of his eye, Roud noticed a tiny field mouse watching them intently with big blue eyes.

Big blue eyes? he thought as he did a double take-- but the mouse was gone. Ah, I probably just imagined it in all the excitement; mice don't have blue eyes, he chided himself.

"So that's it, huh?" asked Blackie.

"Yeah, that's it," answered Roud. "He's dead. Let's go home."

Lysander bent down and removed the rings and necklace, putting them away in his pouches, and the men walked away. They did not see the right hand of the skeleton clench as if in frustration or anger.

The field mouse came out once more, blue eyes flashing back and forth. Making sure the danger had passed, the mouse suddenly underwent a remarkable transformation. Swelling rapidly, the thing stood on its reforming hind legs, grew human hands and arms, and formed clothes from the receding fur on its body.

When the process was complete, Wendrom Sestur stood over the remains of Duclat. The sky darkened and the wind menacingly whipped at the surrounding trees. Clouds moved in quickly, and thunder rumbled in the distance.

As the storm moved in, the druid solemnly buried the bones of Aarich Duclat in the soft, brown earth, and, as the first raindrops fell, Wendrom bent over the grave and whispered, "Rest in peace, but try not to take too long. We have a job to do. In the meantime, the storm should keep our friends preoccupied."

* * * * *

The three men were travelling through the forest the next morning, each contemplating the events of the day before. Each also wondered about the sudden change of weather. The thunderstorms had lasted all night, and were only now letting up.

They were caught off guard by the old man they met on the road. He appeared almost out of nowhere, his haggard appearance suggesting he'd been on the road a long while.

"Greetings, fellow travellers!" the man hailed them. "Rough weather, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is." Roud replied cautiously.

"Should be letting up soon," the man continued, and, as he spoke, the sun peeked through the receding clouds, glinting in his deep blue eyes.

In the distance, horse's hooves sounded faintly.

"Sounds like a horseman coming." the stranger said as he smiled. "Well, I must be going." And before they could question him, he dashed off into the woods.

None of them noticed as, a moment later, a large, blue-eyed hawk settled in the tree limbs above them to await the coming of the horseman.

The men gazed in shock as the horse and rider came into view. The beast was an incredible specimen, and yet, it was like no other horse any of them had ever seen. Its hooves were translucent and glassy, its coat darker than black somehow, and its teeth... its teeth were long and pointed, like a wolf's. The rider wore a hooded black cloak that hid his face and billowed out behind him. They moved with incredible speed.

As the horseman drew up in front of them, he threw off his hood and smiled down at them.

"Good morning gentlemen," Aarich Duclat greeted them. "I am extremely disappointed," he said before he began laughing and laughing...

To be continued...

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Skills for Sale

by Thomas Kane

"What now?" Battlehorn sighed. The party had spent everything for this adventure. Player characters and henchmen alike had purchased the best gear possible. The hoard under Castle Saranoff was tremendous, but extremely well guarded. Battlehorn and company would give anything to have it. Even a magic potion had been purchased at many times its worth. Now it was all gone. Bandits had weakened the party, and, by the time they reached the Great Gate of the Saranoffs, several of them were dead. They were captured and stripped by monsters in the castle. Only by going into debt did they ransom their lives. Now the party was penniless. Without equipment, adventuring would be suicide.

"I'm attacking the GM," Battlehorn announces. The party has given its lamenting to hoot and shout, because without money, weapons, or gear, a party cannot adventure. One way for parties to regain these finances is to take mundane jobs.

JOBHUNTING--

Player characters are highly specialized in their own classes. They cannot undertake professions demanding high levels of skill (such as blacksmith, woodworker, mason, etc.). Also, most jobs in the Middle Ages involved vassalage or other forms of lifetime commitment. This is unacceptable for adventuring player characters. Henchmen, of course, expect to be well supported by their masters. Morale will drop considerably if henchmen are forced to undertake normal jobs. They will certainly not give up any of their pay or beg if either can be avoided.

PLEASE GIVE--

Characters may attempt to beg when in need of money. Begging is not impossible, but it is not very profitable either. A character that is seeking alms will receive a number of copper pieces equal to his charisma and 0-5 (1d6-1) extra copper pieces per

day. If he/she represents a popular religion, provides good entertainment (a bard might sing), or appears especially pitiful (having some sort of real or faked maiming), then 0-3 (1d4-1) silver pieces will be received as well. Begging is not looked upon well by most societies. There is a 5% cumulative per day chance that a passerby will try to humiliate or even kill the beggar.

ASSISTANT POSITIONS--

Many characters will be too proud to beg or forbidden to do so for other reasons. If the characters have other sorts of skills, then they might be able to become assistants to a craftsman that practises a trade that they are familiar with. There is a 10% chance that a given tradesman will be able to use such a short-term assistant. Should characters contact one that does need help, then a reaction roll must be made to see if the player will be taken on as an assistant. The character will be hired for 1-10 weeks and will be paid 1-20 sp each week. The exact amount depends upon the employer's profits.

MASS LABOR--

Large projects requiring unskilled labor might also be available. This would include the building of city walls, castles, large ships, roads, or almost any other large structure. Harvest season might create the need for such laborers, although most of the work like this would be done by serfs, so being hired is not likely. If you do not have time to actually determine such events, then assume a 20% chance of such a project taking place. The details would depend upon the area. Of course if slave labor is popular in the area, the chances for laborers being needed would be decreased. If the work is strenuous, then there might be a penalty for low strength or constitution scores.

MERCENARY WORK--

Fighters may seek service as

mercenaries. Naturally, they will probably only be interested in short term affairs, such as a single raid or battle. There is a 15% chance that a local NPC will be recruiting for such a venture. Rates can be determined however you wish. Higher level characters may be able to become sergeants, lieutenants, or captains. Any of various large scale combat systems may be used to resolve the conflict, but if you do not own such a product, then assume that there is a 40% chance of the character being injured. Fighters may reduce this chance by 1% per level. Other classes reduce this by 1% per two levels. If wounding occurs, then there is a 70% chance that d100-1 (0-99) of the character's hit points was done in damage and a 30% chance that he will die.

MAGIC PEDDLING--

Spellcasters have a great advantage when trying to raise money. The sale of spells and magical knowledge can be very profitable. Clerics especially must be careful so as not to offend their deities by selling magic. The following are the percentage chances that each class has of being able to sell magic in a given week:

Cleric	40%
Others	15%

Advertising will add 1% to this chance per 1gp spent. For each successful week, 1-100 gp will be gained.

USING THE SYSTEM--

Obviously, many details need to be tailored to fit specific campaign areas. In war-torn lands there will be a much greater demand for mercenaries and magical support for troops. Isolated areas will offer very few jobs and less kind people to help support beggars. If your campaign is based on the historical Middle Ages, then workers might be expected to join guilds. This will entail dues and certain standards of quality. In

return, the guild protects members from competing tradesman. Guild membership could also be a base for some adventures if the guild is involved in intrigue with some local authority or if there are power struggles within the guild itself.

NPCs are not stupid. The prices listed here are maximums, not first offers. A character who is seeking a position as a smith's assistant will be first be offered only a few copper pieces. Only through fierce bargaining will the characters be paid the listed rates.

It is possible that characters might try to abuse mundane employment. They may use it frequently or for long periods of time in hopes of obtaining large sums of money. This holds up play since mundane pursuits are hardly exciting. Spellcasters will be particularly tempted by this since they can make significant sums of money this way. By keeping careful track of how much money the characters spend during daily life will encourage them to return to adventuring. Also, the available customers/ employers will drop considerably after a few weeks. Prices will go down and the local authorities might impose heavy taxes. These occurrences should coerce characters to begin adventuring again.

There are times when PCs will sorely need extra money. The amount that they make by doing lesser jobs should be enough to revitalize a party, but will not usually be as lucrative as adventuring. Characters might also take mundane jobs while in hiding as part of a disguise. Episodes such as these can give the players a feel for daily life in a fantasy world. The NPCs that a party deals with could provide connections for future play.

"Stone"- from page 4

He smiled, "In a couple hours I can throw this coat away and relax in the Frumdoig sun."

He flagged down a taxi. A dragon with a black box on its back lightly touched down on the roof. A dark cabbie propped open the door. A scarf was wrapped around his face and Pedlo heard his muffled voice say, "I can't carry all that."

"Yea? What can you carry?" Pedlo asked.

The driver looked around. "You, and the gold."

The girls moaned. Pedlo shrugged. "Sorry, girls." He pitched Dan a bag of gold. "Load'm up."

As Dan tossed the bags onto the dragon, its back began to sag under the weight. Still several bags were left. Pedlo grabbed a bag in each and then said, "You guys, split that up."

He climbed into the seat and signalled to the driver, "Take me to Frumdoig."

The dragon lifted its load up from the roof and wheeled around to the south. The driver asked, "What's the time?"

Pedlo checked his watch, "Eleven fifty-fou...". In an instant, Pedlo was sucked into his lucky stone. The scarf fell away from the driver's face and revealed him to be the stranger. His eyes burned red with fire as he leaned over the seat to throw the square of leather over the gem.

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"tech" from page 10

communication organization), several bandit kings, and smaller governments. These sections alone are almost worth the price of Mechwarrior because they provide information for endless Battletech scenarios.

Mechwarrior is by far not the best roleplaying game on the market, but it is adequate. It is the weak point of a very good and enjoyable system.

	BATTLETECH	CITYTECH
APPEARENCE	8	6
COMPONENTS	9	10
PLAYABILITY	9	8
COMPLEXITY	6	7
SUM	8	8

	AEROTECH	MECHWARRIOR
APPEARENCE	8	8
COMPONENTS	7	N/A
PLAYABILITY	8	6
COMPLEXITY	7	6
SUM	8	6

Tales of the Black Widow 7--Useless if you prefer to play your own unit instead of playing the Widow's company. Good background for possible opponents to players. Excellent if you only own Battletech.

Battletech Map Set 9--Wonderful to have.

Decision at Thunder Rift 7--I highly recommend reading this book before purchasing the games. It is good reading, and it will give you an idea of the type of action in Battletech gaming.

"Price" from page 17

campaigns in several game systems, then you should still think about looking into TPF. It's a game that is well thought out, well presented, AND enjoyable.

RATINGS

APPEARANCE: 6
COMPONENTS: 8
PLAYABILITY: 7
COMPLEXITY: 8
SUM: 8

Two supplements have recently been made available, but due to their release time, could not be included in this review. They are: "The Price of Freedom Game Master Pack" and an adventure called "Your Own Private Idaho".

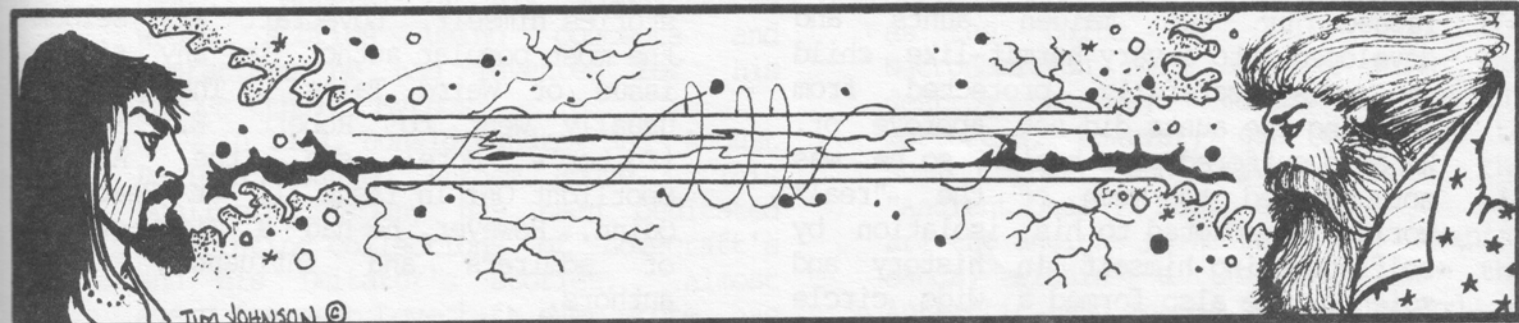
"World" from page 20

or campaign development. Some general things to consider before purchasing it, however, are: Did you enjoy Stephen King's novel Firestarter? Do you enjoy movies such as Brainstorm or Dreamscape? If yes, then get your money ready.

RATINGS

APPEARANCE: 8
COMPONENTS: 7
PLAYABILITY: 7
COMPLEXITY: 5
SUM: 7

"The Hammer Shall Strike" (This adventure supplement is useful mostly because of its addition of the major discipline Animalist and ten minor disciplines. It also lists marginal psionic abilities which the weaker 90% of Psis possess.)- SUM: 6



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HP LOVECRAFT

by William Wilson Goodson, Jr.

Howard Phillips Lovecraft was born on August 20, 1890 in Providence, Rhode Island. He was an intelligent child and was reading by the age of four. By his late teens he was writing astronomy columns for two newspapers. He was raised by two maiden aunts and developed into a very hermit-like child who was carefully protected from anything the aunts did not approve of. He also suffered poor health, so he was not exposed to much of the "real" world. He adapted to his isolation by self-educating himself in history and science. He also formed a wide circle of friends through the mail. Most of his correspondents were fellow SF&F readers.

Lovecraft began writing for major amateur-press publications such as The United Amateur and The National Amateur. Many of his stories were already of professional quality and he later sold some of these. At first, he lacked the confidence to submit his stories to paying magazines. For most of his life, he seems to have viewed his writing simply as an extension of his correspondance- a means for a shy, reclusive person to make contact with others of similar interests. Finally, he wrote a series of short stories and a novelette called The Lurking Fear for a semi-professional publication called Home Brew. It was the appearance of Weird Tales in 1924 which gave Lovecraft his chance to grow as a writer. Farnsworth Wright was a patient editor who was able to deal with Lovecraft's use of archaic

spelling and occasionally handwritten manuscripts. He also read past Lovecraft's long and often self-depreciating cover letters. The extra time he spent with Lovecraft suggests that he enjoyed the early stories himself. Lovecraft was seldom the most popular author in any single issue of Weird Tales. That honor usually went to Robert E. Howard [Editor's Note: see the Author Spotlight On: in issue #1] or Seaberry Quinn. However, he had a wide circle of admirers and influenced many authors.

Lovecraft married and moved to New York in 1928. The marriage lasted only two years. Soon after the wedding, Lovecraft lapsed back into his normal dreamy, impractical state and left his wife (a successful business woman) to support them both. The failure was also due in part to Lovecraft's strong distaste for New York with its constant noise, vulgarities, and "foreign influences". Refernces to foreigners in some of Lovecraft's stories have earned him the reputation of being a bigot. It is interesting to note that Lovecraft was never reportedly rude to anyone. In fact, his wife was Jewish. Lovecraft seems to have been less a conscious bigot than just ignorant. In the climate of the 1920's and 30's, he probably never met any Negroes or Asians socially.

After his return to Providence, Lovecraft became a hermit once again. During the course of the next few years, Lovecraft's health began to

fail. He lived on as little as \$1 a day from a tiny inheritance and often corresponded with as many as one-hundred people at a time. He also began to write some very thoughtful stories which he never submitted. Fortunately, in 1936, a friend named Donald Wandrei edited two of Lovecraft's new stories ("The Shadow Out of Time" and "At the Mountain of Madness") and sold them to Astounding Science Fiction. Lovecraft had a low opinion of the writing in the SF pulps but earned the largest check of his career from this sale. His last few stories clearly show a mixing of conventional horror elements and SF props.

On March 15, 1937, Howard Phillips Lovecraft died of intestinal cancer and nephritis (a chronic inflammation of the kidneys). He was forty-seven. His greatest fame actually came after his death. Several of his acquaintances wrote stories using concepts and characters he had invented for his famous Cthulhu Mythos.

In 1939, Donald Wandrei and August Derleth founded Arkham House. This publishing company has been dedicated to printing collections of Lovecraft's and his imitator's stories. Almost every fragment Lovecraft ever wrote has been printed, including collections of his letters. Many incomplete ideas he left in his records have been expanded into stories by various writers. Most of Lovecraft's fiction was moody and designed to produce fear, dread, and awe in those who read them. In his essay "Supernatural Horror in Literature", Lovecraft commented in this way:

"Atmosphere is the all important thing, for criterion of authenticity is not the dovetailing of plot, but the creation of a given sensation."

Perhaps the most unique feature of Lovecraft's writing was his "materialism". He wrote horror stories concerning great power, but avoided supernatural explanations and instead used aliens from distant planets rather

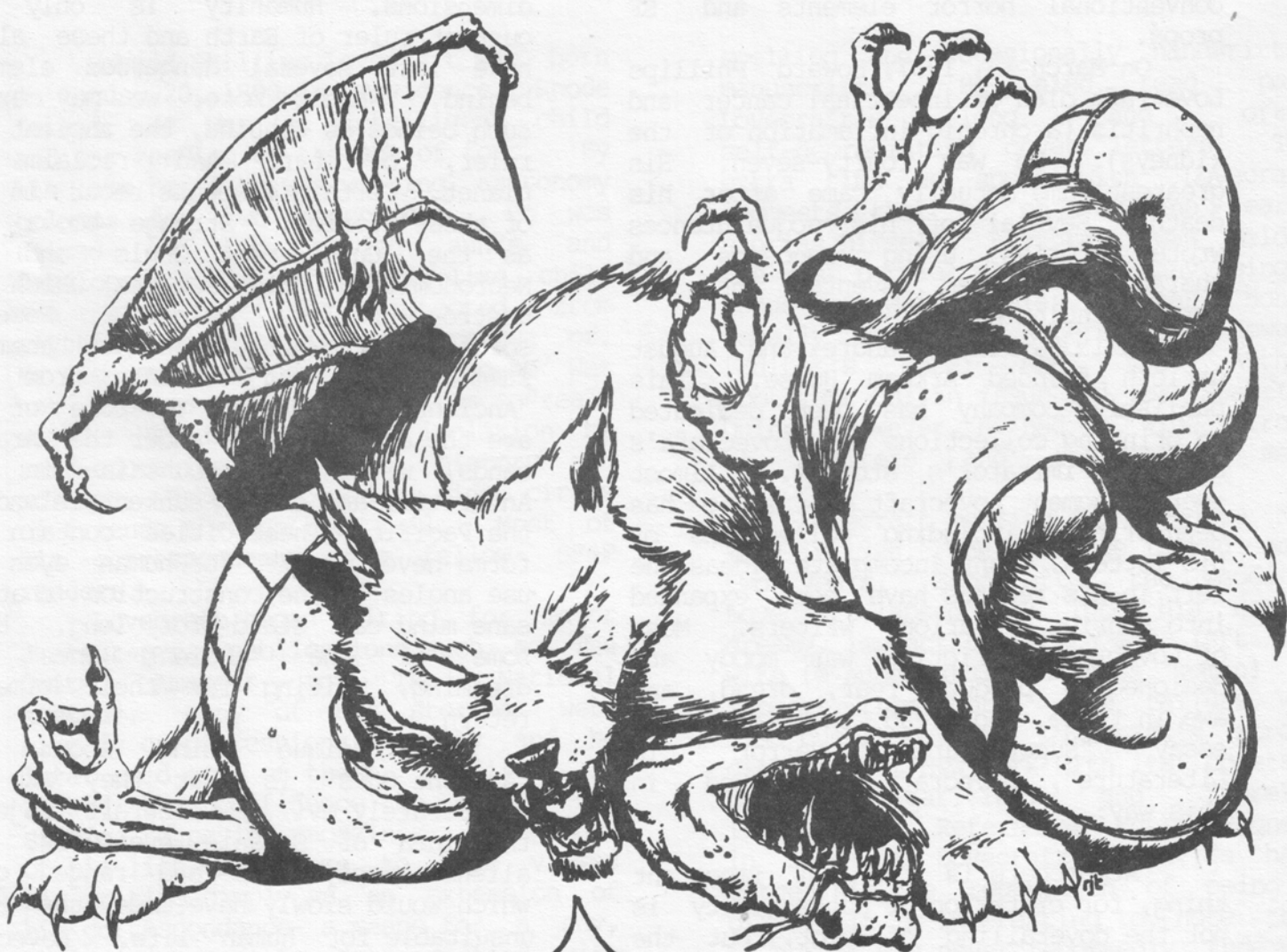
than demons or vampires. My personal favorite of his longer stories is "The Strange Case of Charles Dexter Ward" (1941). This is a story of resurrection that is based on a system of mysticism that Lovecraft tried to make look like a highly developed alien science.

H.P. Lovecraft's most famous series was the Cthulhu Mythos- a set of stories stretching from "The Nameless City" (1921) to "The Thing on the Doorstep" (1937). Read as a whole, the Cthulhu series describes the past occupation of the Earth by several alien races from other planets and dimensions. Humanity is only the current ruler of Earth and these aliens have left several dangerous elements behind. What's more, we may expect such beings as Cthulhu, the ancient sea ruler, to return and reclaim our planet. Certain elements recur in all of these stories. Strange books such as the Cults de Ghuls and the Necronomicron hold secrets which can destroy healthy minds. Powerful sorcerers, however, can use them to summon power and servants from the "Ancient Ones". Most terrible of all are the ancient ruins under the Arabian sands, within a mountain in the Antarctic, and on a sunken island in the Pacific. These cities contain art forms never created for human eyes and use angles in the construction that no sane mind can stand for long. Here, some of the "Ancient Ones" lie dreaming, waiting for their time to return.

The unique thing about the "Ancient Ones" is that they are not deliberately evil. Lovecraft rejected the idea of Satanic creatures. His aliens simply had long range goals which would slowly have made the Earth unsuitable for human life. Lovecraft developed his mythology in sufficient detail so as to create several memorable stories, but left enough to obscurity so as to stimulate his readers' imaginations. Other writers have produced volumes of stories set in this imaginary universe. Entire books have chronicled this universe's history.

Chaosium, Inc. has created an entire RPG game based on Lovecraft's world. "Call of Cthulhu" is the winner of several awards and pits the PC "investigators" against the dangerous survivors of past eras. The unique feature of the game is that characters have not only health points but sanity points as well. A character can suffer not only physical damage, but may be driven insane by the horrors that are encountered.

Lovecraft the materialist would deny any belief in an afterlife, yet one cannot help but hope that he is aware of how his work and life are not forgotten. Even better would be if he had lived to receive royalties from the many publications of his works. The shy, reclusive, prematurely aged author was only a limited success during his own lifetime. His habits were those not shared by many. Yet without his many personal quirks, would his work have been as original?



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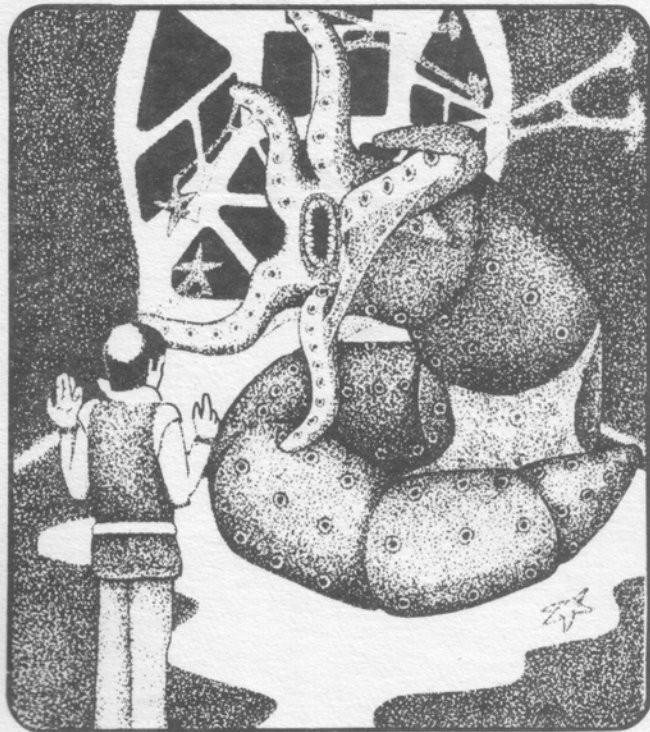
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Even before the night had fallen, they came back; hordes of mutated creatures, demons and ghosts, armed with rifles and grenades by their master, the insane sorcerer Black Wolf. Teinquerion watched his friend ready another arrow and take aim at the closest mutant; for nearly two days now, they had fought back attack after attack on this lonely crag of rock, and the elf still did not show any signs of fatigue. Teinquerion, human by birth and fighter by trade, thought back on all the fiends he had vanquished in his life. He remembered the giants that had raided his homeland, smashing entire houses with their bare hands, the wars between the Free States, the soldiers who fought with steel and the merchants who fought with gold, the witch-king he had defeated in single combat, and so many others. He had fought all his life, against swords and against spells... and now against machines. An elf screamed to his left, flung off the crag by machine gun fire, dead before he hit the ground; hideous creatures threw themselves on him, swinging blood encrusted axes and maces. Teinquerion blocked the first one's blow, and riposted with his longsword, slashing deep in the mutated flesh; the creature howled, falling on his comrades who were still scaling up the crag. As the elves fought on and the mutants fell back, Teinquerion began to hope that he might live to see another day, in the grim world of **Fireland** . . .



The gigantic worm shaped creature drunkenly slithered forward, dripping toxic slime as it reared its tentacled head towards Father Vicente. A deep throbbing sound came from it, followed by the translator's metallic voice: "Explain to me again exactly what it is you mean by immaculate conception, priest-human." Father Vicente stepped back, trying to avoid the noxious amonia vapours the thing was releasing; he had been given poor assignments by the New Vatican cardinals, but never quite so bad. Nevertheless, alliance with these creatures would give the Holy Empire enough power to defeat the imperial cities of earth, and free thousands of star systems. He somehow had to convince this alien monster that Pope Catherine represents God in the universe, and siding with her would mean glory not only in this world but in heaven; Father Vicente struggled to find the right words. "It's something like that, the Holy Spirit is..." Father Vicente never finished his sentence, as the salvo of nuclear missiles hit his ship vaporizing him and the Outworlder ambassador. Thousands of miles away, aboard a strike cruiser of the imperial city of Tucsan, an officer grinned as the sensors reported a direct hit. There would be no negotiations this time; New Vatican would have to fight alone against the might of **IMPERIAL EARTH...**

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