



In commemoration of this issue's focus on Albion we will be looking at one of the more obscure, little known, and in my opinion, useless of WFB products. It should be noted that I will not be looking at this as a resource for players of Warhammer Fantasy Battle, but as a source of information for background on the Warhammer World.

What You Get

As stated above, this is a boxed warhammer supplement. Inside the box are a number of color cardboard buildings, color cardboard characters (lacking stands), a color map of the McDeath Kingdom, red and blue command sheets, the Gamesmaster's Guide with a color cover and black and white interior, color cardboard building floorplans, and a FREE FULL-COLOUR BADGE!

The Cover

For something in the mid-80's the cover does a good job of conveying the feel of the game, a rather moody looking McDeath wearing his crown upon a troubled brow. The inspiration for this John Blanche cover, I assume, would be the ending scene of Conan the Barbarian, where a rather moody looking Arnold Schwarzenegger wears his crown upon a troubled brow. But that's a story for another time...

The back of the box has a picture of the contents.

The Tragedy of McDeath Gamesmaster's Guide

This book is a 24 page book, Blanche full color cover and black and white illustrations by the WFRP rulebook illustrator Tony Ackland. The actual content of this will be covered below, but the inside back cover has all the drawings of the counters inside labeled so that you know who is who.

Command Sheets

These command sheets, Red for the McDeath player and blue for his opponents number eight, are illustrated, including some rather humorous banners. The rest of the illustrations are uninspired, and mostly details of other pictures published in this adventure or in others.

"The Kingdome of McDeath Map"



This map was one of the two reasons why I bought this scenario box, since I thought it would be great to have one of the maps of Albion that GW produced. I was disappointed however to discover that the map is only a map of McDeath's Kingdom, showing nothing else of Albion and only being labeled with locations from the McDeath campaign. No initiative is taken to detail any other locales. the drawing is also inset with drawings of some of the antagonists. This map is of little use to those seeking a map of Albion.

Castle Maps

There are four folding maps with the layouts of McDeath's castle, the locale of the final battle in the game. These maps could conceivably be used in WFRP, WFB, and Mordheim games with little effort I would imagine, although the scale might be a bit off.

Cardstock Colour Buildings

The instructions for constructing these buildings are in the back of the Gamemaster's Guide. I can't tell you how many there are because I bought it used, and as always, half the buildings are cut up and left unassembled. This scenery of buildings would

be useful for games like Mordheim and WFB and for those who use minis in WFRP. Once again, the scale might be off between the buildings and the figures, but it would do the job.

Heaps of Cardboard Character Counters

As to be expected, the previous owner had also meticulously cut out all the counters so I have no idea how many sheets there were, but there are a lot of one sided color counters. These counters are base counters, rather than standing counters and are the size of the base appropriate to the character. This scenario pack disappointed me in many ways, but the counters were a pleasant surprise and conveyed a feel for the personalities of the figures. The images provided are of the Lord McBeth and his missus.



The Pin

Sorry, I can't tell you much about the pin - since it was missing from the boxed set - yet another reminder of the dangers of buying over the internet! But there is a picture on the back, a pink button with a green orc head that reads: "OUT OUT DAMN SPOT" ("Spot" being McDeath's chaos hound pet).

What it is

Essentially this is a parody of the much beloved and maligned Shakespeare play "McDeath", set up as a 2nd edition Warhammer Fantasy Battle Scenario. Better, it is an example of how not to write a scenario pack. The scenario is confusing - the Gamesmaster Pack has some befuddled overviews and summaries of what it going on, but they require constant reference to the Command Sheets that the players have. In order for the GM to have some idea of what is going on, he has to refer to all three. Worse is the fact that much of the background is written in verse just like McDeath. And although it is a parody, it is a tedious one at that.

The rationale for the battles is fairly weak. The gist is that McDeath killed the rightful king and under his oppressive reign discontent has grown and he is now attacked by a force allied against him. The first scenario, Winwood Harbor involves the invasion by Julia McEwman and her clan against another clan while marching upon McDeath. The pretext is weak, but I suppose it provides a battle involving caber throwing, broken bottles, shot puts, and jokes about kilts. The second scenario Loch Lorm entails the raid by Donalbane, surviving son of the murdered king with his allies attacking the critical objective of a distillery, a distillery built next to a river in which a loch monster lives. Hilarity ensues. The third objective details the advance of Donalbane's troops towards McDeath's castle and a battle at Dungal Hill where a group of dwarfs have been resisting McDeath's orc forces. Both the McEwman clan and Donalbane's force meet and are joined by Treemen and assault McDeath's castle. Of course there's some gobbledigook about witches' prophesies and the like and the means by which McDeath will meet his end.



The whole thing is rather incoherent, rules are scattered about, character motivations are not clear, and the whole thing seems thrown together with little regard for clarity. Worse, is the parodic verse through the whole thing which makes reading it tedious.

However, this could all be overlooked if it added to our understanding of Albion and/or the Old World, but this scenario pack fails to do that - it simply provides a badly written context to fight four battles strung together with unusual rules for fighting with bottles or rolling ales of malt liquor down hills. Although there are some interesting divisions among the Alliance of the Just, it simply isn't enough to redeem the game.

What we learn is that there is some sort of feudal monarchy in parts of Albion ruling over a bunch of drunken clansmen. Orcs and Ogres live on Albion, and monsters seem to live in rather thin and shallow rivers. I suppose there are a number of other stereotypes as well still not extrapolated regarding kilts and caber tossing...

All in all, this scenario pack provides little or no information regarding the world of WFRP - it is more of a WFB meets Shakespeare rather than an adaptation to the WFRP world. For the WFB player, the rules are old and no longer in use - although the buildings might be of some help. For the rest of us, this rare item is of interest to only the serious collector, the rest will find McDeath lacking in detail or significance. If you do buy it, it's one of those things that sits on shelves or in boxes and gets little use.

Rating: Stun Factor 1

Review by Garrett Lepper

Skavenslayer

This is the second of currently five novels by William King featuring the Trollslayer Gotrek Gurnisson and his companion Felix Jaeger, re-negadeson of a Nuln merchant and poet sworn to record Gotrek's doom in an epic poem. 'Skavenslayer' takes the dynamic duo to the Imperial city of Nuln. For lack of money they join the sewer watch, hunting criminals and Chaos minions in the city's effluent system. Down there, they meet and kill a group of skaven and thus unwittingly foil the schemes of a certain van Halstadt, none less than the head of Nuln's secret police. Don't we role-players know the feeling of being caught between two powerful factions, both intent on killing the adventurers?



Evidently, the skaven are planning a full assault on the city and won't let a stubborn dwarf and his blond-furred companion stop them. Clan Eshin assassins are sent out to deal with the two, who now work as bouncers. Following that, Gotrek and Felix are forced to fight all other skaven clans one after the other. Clan Skryre is intent on stealing steam tanks from the Royal College of Engineering and "improve them with superior skaven technology". Clan Pestilens finds creative ways of spreading a new kind of plague, and Clan Moulder engineers warp-stone-mutated, all-eating rats designed to devour Nuln's food supplies. The scheming mind behind those exploits and most of the failures is Grey Seer Thanquol, a skaven mage intent on leading the final attack on the city, holding the Countess Emmanuelle ransom and bringing glory to his name and the Horned Rat.

'Skavenslayer' is more of a novel than its predecessor 'Trollslayer'. Although some of the chapters have been previously printed in other Games Workshop publications, there is a better sense of cohesion and coherence between the stories in the second novel of the series. The whole plot is set in Nuln, and the temporal gaps between chapters are minimal. Furthermore, there is a constant build-up of tension leading to the climax, a sense of the heroes and the arch-villain approaching. On the other hand, the sequence of chapters is very predictable: between the introduction and the climactic battle at the end, each chapter deals with the machinations of one particular skaven clan. This is the modular structure familiar from GW's army books, which works well for nonfiction gaming publications but is a rather clumsy approach for a novel.

Apart from its structural deficiencies, 'Skavenslayer' is an enjoyable read and succeeds in conveying the down-and-dirty atmosphere of the Old World. In my opinion, William King's most important achievement is his portrayal of the skaven, which come truly alive. They are more than just scheming, stinking little tunnelrunners - in fact, there seems to be a particular kind of skaven psychology. Their behaviour combines a strict code of pride, pomp and wannabe heroism with downright cowardice, culminating in the expression "a leader's place is in the rear". The whole of skaven society suffers from an overwhelming feeling of paranoia, which is more than justified since the clans continually conspire against each. Still, the skaven are not only ridiculed, since the power of their fighters, mages, engineers and plague-monks is awesomely illustrated as well. What is more, King creates some memorable skaven characters, such as the opportunist Lurk Snitchtongue or the archvillain Grey Seer Thanquol.

In my opinion, his sense of characters is William King's greatest talent. Not only among the skaven, but also among the citizens of Nuln we find a number of original, life-like and three-dimensional characters, such as Felix's merchant brother Otto or the scientist-physician Dr. Drexler. Moreover, Felix is again involved in a gentle but melancholic love story, which is closer to reality than to romance. Contrary to many other fantasy novels, 'Skavenslayer' has a human heart.

All in all, 'Skavenslayer' is to be recommended as a straightforward collection of stories true to the atmosphere of the Warhammer World, containing loads of action and great characters, even if the overall scheme of the plot is very predictable.

Rating: Stun Factor 6

Review by Markus Widmer

Storm Warriors

"All things wicked start from innocence." Ernest Hemingway

You might wonder what Hemingway has to do with Warhammer, let alone Brian Craig's Storm Warriors. Once you read the book you will soon learn why the quote is appropriate. Storm Warriors is the third and final tale of the Orfeo Trilogy, and like the previous two books, the action takes place in a different part of the Warhammer world.

Set in Albion, Storm Warriors start out innocent enough when a ship of elves wash ashore on the island of Morien. Sent by King Herta, the bard Trystan, travels to the site to learn what the elves want. The elves, want nothing more to live alone and build a house to reside in while they repair their ship so they can return to their home. The elves give assurances of nothing but good intentions and nothing but a deep interest to cooperate with the humans. Eventually Trystan learns that the elves are not what they seem and they reveal their true nature as dark elves dedicated to Slaanesh.



Storm Warriors is a depressing book, and that is not due to its take on Warhammer. The book is a tragedy, and unlike the current crop of Warhammer novels, Craig does a very good job capturing the feel of a dark world without hope. Though the elves true nature is exposed, and they are defeated, none of the characters remain unchanged. Craig gives the impression that Morien will be forever changed by the events.

Craig's Albion is different in feel from the rest of the Warhammer world, and is heavily influenced by Celtic sources. It does not fit with the typical view of Warhammer, and this version of Albion conflicts with the current GW take on the land. Druids are powerful protectors who strive to protect the world from evil. Bards travel Albion keeping ancient traditions alive and serve as advisors to kings. The nobility is bounded by a code of chivalry that traces its origins back to time when the islands were united under the rule of Agam Rand. Though I do not like this Albion it is far better than what GW has recently unveiled to the world.

There is much in Storm Warriors to like and dislike. As already mentioned I did not care for how Albion is portrayed here. I did not like how the elves were handled and the methodic pace Craig took in portraying their true nature. I did enjoy the tragic tone of this book, but at times it was too heavy handed. My main problem was the sudden switch from low magic to high magic fantasy. In the beginning Craig did a good job of making magic and the like rare in the book. Though omens and visions are dealt with, magic is a rare commodity that is mistrusted by the residents of Morien. In the end, Storm Warriors turns into a typical hack fest with spells flying left and right. This destroys what was turning out to be a very good tragic novel.

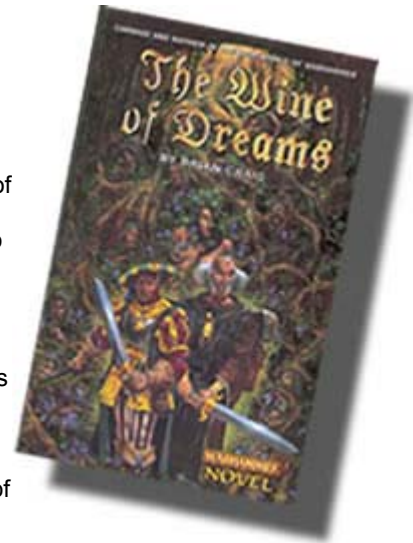
Storm Warriors is a good book that is well worth a read. The book is filled with many useful bits for a game master wanting to use this version of Albion. Though the island of Morien is described through out there are mentions to the other islands. With a little work this can be further fleshed out. The premise of the elves is another good plot device that a game master could recycle and use in their own games. Elves, let alone dark elves, are a rare sight in Warhammer and Craig does a very good job of using them. Storm Warriors is not that bad of a book and compared to the recent offerings from the Black Library, is well worth the effort to track down. (Stun Factor 7)

Rating: Stun Factor 7

Review by Richard Ioro II

Wine of Dreams

After a long time of abstinence from writing, Brian Craig decided to start again writing stories which take place in Games Workshop's grim World of Warhammer. And it seems that the author of novels like Zaragoz and Plague Demon has not forgotten how to create thrilling adventures. The protagonist of Craigs latest novel, "The Wine of Dreams", is the young Reiklander wine-mer-chant Reinmar Weiland. The monotonous live of our young hero changes rapidly as one day a stranger enters the Wine-shop of Reinmar's father and starts to ask questions about some mysterious wine made from dark grapes. Even more disturbingly, the stranger also claims to be a long lost cousin of Reinmar. Curious about this strange dark wine, Reinmar starts to ask questions about it, but everybody he asks claims to know nothing about it. But somehow the young wine-merchant knows that his family is more involved in the trading of the mysterious wine, which is supposed to bring beautiful dreams and to lengthen one's life-span, than his father admits. When the Imperial Witch Hunter von Spurtzheim, accompanied by a huge force of mercenaries, appears in Reinmars home town Eilhart and also starts to ask questions about the mysterious wine, Reinmar decides to make his own investigations. He attracts the attention of the Witch Hunter, who gives him the opportunity to search for the source of the dark wine, which is supposed to grow somewhere in the foothills of the grey mountains. Together with the merc-enary Vadaecker and a couple of his father's servants, young Reinmar starts his search for the mysterious dark grapes.



On their search the party comes to a small village where an upset mob of peasants wildly attacks a group of gipsies. As one of the gipsies, a young beautiful girl, is seriously wounded by a thrown stone, Reinmar and his companions throw themselves between the quarrelling groups to save the gipsies. The young wine-merchant decides to take care of the wounded girl and takes her with them on their further journey. Soon, Reinmar realizes that the injured gipsy-girl stands under the influence of some unknown power, known to the gipsies as 'the Call'. In a feverish trance she leaves the party, aimlessly wandering through the forests followed by Reinmar and Vadaecker. The girl leds them to a hidden valley with a peaceful monastery dedicated to Morr, lord of dreams and death. But obviously the monks have turned away from Morr long ago to follow a darker lord of pleasure... In the cellars beneath the mo-nastery the adventurers discover a horrible secret: the source of the mysterious dark wine. When the monks discover the two intruders and attack them, Reinmar destroys their stock of the undiluted dark liquid, which seems to be the major ingredient of the dark wine, not without taking a small phial of the essence for himself. Eventually they both manage to escape from the valley and return to the town Eilhart to report their discovery to the Witch Hunter. But by stealing the phial, Reinmar has doomed Eilhart: a large force of Beastmen and Mutants attacks the Town. With great casualties the defenders under the command of the Witch Hun-ter von Spurtzheim, who looses his live in the attempt to save Eilhart, manage to fight back the Forces of evil . During the confusion of the battle Reinmar's girlfriend is kidnapped by his mysterious cousin who wants the stolen phial of dark wine in exchange for her live. In the showdown the true role of the Weiland family is revealed and Reinmar manages to rescue his girl-friend.

Wine of Dreams is a thrilling story with a couple of very good ideas for Roleplaying adventures, but at some time in the middle of the book it becomes boring. Until the battle for the town Eilhart, the story creates an almost cthuluesque atmosphere, capturing the reader with the plot. But as soon as the description of the battle starts, the story is nothing more than mere description of battle scenes. It seems that Games Workshop forces its authors to in-clude large battle scenes in all of their stories. To be honest, describing battles isn't Brian Craigs strength, the Gotrek & Felix-stories by William King are far better in that respect . Furthermore the end of the story is rather unsatisfactory as too many questions remain unanswered. "The Wine of Dreams" could be a masterpiece of a dark fantasy novel, with a thrilling and exciting story and many good ideas to create adventures around it but the disappointing second part destroys much of the atmosphere created in the first part of the book. All in all, Wine of dreams is worth reading as long as you ignore the battle scenes and enjoy the dark fantasy atmosphere created during the first 150 pages of the novel.

Rating: Stun Factor 7

Review by Natascha Chrobok

Le Grimoire from Fandom to Stardom

If your happiness as a fan of WFRP depends on new reading matter, you better be French! For one, Jeux Descartes, the owner of Games Workshop's French license, is much more prolific than Hogshead or any other foreign publisher. They are continuously reprinting translations of each and every WFRP supplement ever published (except Lichemaster), and they have even produced the first part of their own, exclusively French campaign ("Pour la gloire d'Ulric"). As if that weren't enough, there is also Le Grimoire, a fan-based magazine whose issues have reached the status of unofficial supplements in France.



The mastermind behind Le Grimoire is Sébastien Boudaud, based in a small French town called Cholet. The magazine was founded in 1992, Sébastien told STRIKE TO STUN, when a group of role-players called 'Western Barbarians' decided they should have their own publication. The first print run originally consisted of 25 issues - or 'tomes' in Le Grimoire's terminology. All the articles, rules, GM aids and scenarios in the first few tomes were written by Sébastien himself, but he soon found help when he asked for submissions by his readers. Today, his team consists of 10 contributors, although most of these are illustrators. So much of the writing is still up to Sébastien. "I am very proud," he says, "of the fact that most of my colleagues have become professionals, working for French RPG-publishers and magazines, or creating graphic novels."

Le Grimoire itself, though, is still a strictly non-profit affair. All contributors work for free, and there is no support from any RPG-publisher or Games Workshop. This does not preclude professionalism, though. Nowadays, the magazine is even distributed by 'Millennium', but until only a year ago Sébastien had sold Le Grimoire directly to over 110 shops in France and other countries. Nevertheless, Le Grimoire has sold over 27000 tomes since 1992. Actually, their professional attitude entailed some trouble for Le Grimoire. Reading an article on them in 'Casus Belli', Games Workshop's Phil Gallagher became aware of the ambitious French fanzine and demanded a copy of issue #7. Funnily enough, the cover of that tome was in colour - a first in RPG fanzines - and showed a scantily clad amazon. Yet that wasn't the reason Phil Gallagher finally intervened, says Sébastien: "He told us to either limit our circulation or buy a licence from Games Workshop. The licence was far too expensive and much too constraining, so we didn't accept. From that moment, we had to slow down the frequency of our publications in order not to get into trouble with GW. Our tomes have in turn become thicker, from 56 to 72 pages to 100 pages and more".

Consequently, Le Grimoire's tomes approximated not only the volume, but also the status of official supplements. The issues started to focus on one particular theme. Thus Le Grimoire developed relatively unknown parts of the Warhammer World such as Araby, Lustria or Nippon. Two special tomes, "Arcanes Magiques" and "Manuel du Joueur" appeared, detailing dozens of new spells and careers, respectively, all lusciously illustrated and well-presented. Finally, Le Grimoire published a tome which was more voluminous than anything GW, Hogshead or Flame had ever produced - apart from the rulebook. At 222 pages, "Sartosa: La Cité des pirates" is a full unofficial supplement, detailing locations, careers, scenarios and much more in and around the pirate isle of Sartosa, Estalia, Tilea and the Border Princes.

"We worked hard at that," says Sébastien. "I did a whole lot of research on pirates by myself in libraries and on the internet. We also co-operated with the fans on the WFRP-mailing list. In the end, our team consisted of people from Germany, Denmark, England, America, Italy (for the articles on Tilea) and, of course, France. I don't think I could do it again. It was crazy, but the result was worth it." Sartosa sold well and is still very much in demand. Unfortunately, it is very unlikely that there will ever be an English translation of this or any other special tome by Le Grimoire. Clearly, Hogshead as well as Games Workshop would have to agree to that, and Sébastien says that Hogshead do not allow them to translate, edit and distribute their work in English. Furthermore, publishing background material on region which Games Workshop have not yet developed themselves, such as Nippon or Araby, would certainly cause legal problems.

Hence all those WFRP-fans out there who do not speak French will either have to limit themselves to enjoy the wonderful illustrations in Le Grimoire's tomes, or at least read our comprehensive reviews on their special tomes, soon to be published in STRIKE TO STUN.

Review by Markus Widmer

Town Cryer 13

Fanatic just released the latest issue of Town Cryer, the magazine for the game placed in the City of the damned. As always, the Fanatic team has tried hard to create a good supplement for Mordheim. On 45 pages you can find the newest material for Games Workshops skirmish game.

The first thing that strikes you is the superb photo on the cover which shows two of the most well-known mordheim heroes: Ulli Leitpold and Marquand Volker. Games Workshop just has released Miniatures of the two protagonists known from black-libraries Warhammer-monthly comic and it is clear that advertising this new models had priority for the new Town Cryer. After a short editorial by Steve Hambrook, who also talks (too) much about the two Mordheim-heroes, Town Cryer starts with the description of Ulli & Marquand. From now on it is possible to hire this two rogues as Dramatis Personae for your warband. Surprisingly, the stats of the two are well-balanced and not overpowered. Especially the rule, that the two can be bribed to change the sides during the game (!) is very interesting and can add much atmosphere to mordheim-games. The next section holds the fourth part of the Lustria - Cities of Gold project, which started in Town Cryer 10. It starts with two new scenarios specifically created for adventures in the jungles of Lustria. Also, two new Hired Swords, the Shadow Warrior and the Big Game Hunter are introduced to the game. The next part is the best of the Lustrian section: a whole new Warband, the Norse are introduced to the game. And they are stunningly great! The author, Derek Whitman has done a great job. The rules for the warriors from the cold north come together some nice ideas how to make your own norse-miniatures. The Lustria section ends with an article about making jungle trees.



In the following subplot section Warhammer-mastermind Gav Thorpe comes up with some new ideas about adding more atmosphere to the game. Like the Random Happenings-table the players roll a D 6 in the beginning of the game and if somebody rolls a 1 a subplot is added to the game. This reaches from the birthday party of the Warbands-captain to a horrible Wyrdstone-lightning. As always, the following Questions and Answers section tries to clarify some misunderstandings of new rules. The Mordheim-scenario "The Sword of the Herald" is the best part of Town Cryer 13. It is the first Mordheim-scenario, which needs a referee or gamemaster to run the "baddies". I liked it much because it has some feeling of a roleplaying game, which opens a whole new dimension to the Mordheim game. The Warbands have to search for a magical sword and are hindered by hordes of Zombies, which guard the magical item. The last chapter of TC 13 brings new Hired swords for Mordheim. With the Duelist, the Bard, the Bounty Hunter and the Witch a group of mighty new Warriors, each with very special skills enter the city of the damned. Especially the witch, which is able to cast spells and to create potions for the other members of your warband is a nice Hired Sword. I'm eager to see if this new hired swords are used in my local Mordheim league.

As always, the new Town Cryer holds many of interesting stuff. Especially the scenario and the new Hired sword will give the game new impressions. The only drawback is the Lustrian section. If you are just playing the Mordheim-setting, and most of the Mordheim-players only play this setting, the Lustria stuff is of no use. I mean, 15 pages out of 48 pages means that nearly a third consists entirely of material which is useless for most Mordheim-players. Although the Lustria stuff is really great, it would be a good idea if Fanatic would publish it in a special "Lustria"-edition. But lets see what the future brings. There are rumours that Town Cryer 14 will be the last with Lustria material. Issue 15 will introduce us to a new alternative setting...

Rating: Stun Factor 7

Review by Natascha Chrobok

Town Cryer 14

The latest issue of Fanatics Town Cryer magazine just arrived. And, as always it looks very promising. After a short Editorial by Steve Hambrook, Town Cryer No 14 starts with its main topic: Rules for mounted Beasts in Mordheim. Especially for those Mordheim players who are planning to buy a mount for their warband might be interested in the new rules. The article introduces a couple of new interesting skills like Trick Riding or Horse Archer, rules for Riding (loosing control over your mount included) as well as new riding animals like the War Boar, the Giant Wolf and the Elven Steed.. Although the new rules are very interesting to read I doubt that they will ever be used on a regular term, as riding animals are very expensive and most Mordheim players will think twice before they buy a mount (unless they have large amounts of money to spend which is quite unlikely as most Warbands suffer from a permanent lack of money). The article ends with two new scenarios which can only be played with the new rules.



The next two Article belong to the "Lustria- Cities of Gold"-setting. The first article describes new Artifacts for Lustria from the "Jaguar Mace" to the "Circlet of the Slann". Although the new items were created for the Lustria setting, some of them could easily converted for the use in a normal Mordheim campaign. Especially items like the "Plague Sword" or the "Crimson Armour of the Blood Dragon" sound very interesting. The second part of the Lustria-section introduces a new Warband: the Tileans. And to be true, this new Warband seems to be very, very intriguing. Like the normal human Mercenaries, the Tilean Mercenaries can belong to three different backgrounds: the Miragleans, the Remasens and the Trantios. Each of this warbands has special benefits, for instance the Miragleans are expert crossbowmen, the Trantios have more starting money (like the Marienburgers) etc. The only other difference to the ordinary Mercenary-warband are the Duellists which replace the Swordsmen. They are experts in a special fighting technique called cloak and dagger which allows them to use a hand weapon and a dagger while being treated like having a shield in close combat. There is also a new weapon introduced, the pike which allows you to attack your enemies from up to 3" without being part of a melee. Anyway I see no reason why you should not use the Tileans in a normal Mordheim campaign.

For those who already got bored by the never ending skirmishes in the City of the damned the new Rules about Pit Fights might be interesting. If you liked Gladiator, the movie, you will like this rules. Town Cryer describes totally new rules for Arena fights as well as a new Warband: the Pit Fighters. Although this new Warband seems to be a little bit too overpowered, the rules promise hours of fun. Nearly all of the Pit Figther in the warband are expert warriors and a Dwarf Trollslayer (tough) and a Ogre Pit Fighter (very tough) can be bought as warband members. All in all the new rules seem to be a nice change to the normal Mordheim-scenarios.

The next Article is in my opinion the most interesting in this issue: Dark Rituals of the Chaos Gods. It makes the Possessed warband more powerful as it adds new Rituals to the range of spells available to the Magister. With the new Rules it is possible for the Magister to devout himself to one of the major Chaos Powers (Slaneesh, Nurgle or Tzeentch) to benefit from the bargain with those foul gods. It is possible to summon Daemons or cast specific spells like Father Nurgles Pestilence which is my personal favourite. Although I like this new rules as the Possessed are one of my favourite warbands, I'm not sure if they will be accepted by all MH-players because they make the Possessed even more powerful than they already are.

The final section of Town Cryer 14 is a list of all new rules and additions from the previous Town Cryers. This list is extremely useful if you are searching for a certain rule or new Warband. In addition to the location of the Rule the list also states if this Rules are official or just experimental Rules. Fanatic plans to publish this list in TC on a regular term to give the players an overview where to find which rules.

All in all Town Cryer 14 is a good choice for every Mordheim-player as it adds a lot of new and good stuff to the setting, this time the Lustria section is also useful and interesting as much material can be used in an ordinary game of Mordheim too. To be honest, I'm impatiently looking forward to issue 15.

Rating: Stun Factor 8

Review by Natascha Chrobok

Warpstone 15

I have - finally - received issue Nr. 15 of Warpstone magazine, probably the most famous magazine for WFRP, especially since White Dwarf no longer covers role-playing games. As all Warpstone issues it has superb layout and the images are far above average, although not always my cup of tea. The only point of criticism is that some of the articles have extremely small fonts, which does not make them easier to read. However the standard of Warpstone is much above that of other fanzines.



Besides the regular columns, like news, this issue opens with a piece from Timothy Eccles. His regular column "The Correspondent" is certainly not anyone's taste. And a lot of people would disagree with him. However he always raised some relevant points and even if you do not agree, they are worth considering. In this issue Tim discusses the role of the PCs within the Old World. Are they in any way special, what makes the different between townspeople and adventurers. A point really worth thinking about and, as all of Tim's contributions, worth reading.

What follows is the second part of Graeme Davis' and Phil Gallagher's article on the secrets of the WFRP writers. The article is of little value for the actual gaming. But it does lift the veil a little bit and give you an insight of the process of the canon of WHFRP (the rulebook, Enemy within, etc.). It is fun and interesting to read. John Foody has written a short article on the use of patrons in the game. Patrons are, as he understands them, a good way to introduce PCs into adventures and help them in certain situation. As John sees it, and I agree with him here, patronage is a two-sided thing. They may be helpful in certain situation, the players may begin to rely to much on them. This problem, which is detailed, makes my reaction somewhat ambiguous. John gives a number of problems with the use of patrons, but he fails to solve them himself and leaves that for the GM. Also the article is too short to detail the topic in depth. The centrepiece of this issue is clearly N.Arne Dam's and Timothy Eccles' article on the church of Sigmar. I had a lot of expectations on this article, but felt a little bit disappointed after reading it. The description is good and pretty detailed. The article suffers only from the fact, that the authors have used the Catholic church and transferred too much of its structure in the Middle Ages. I had looked for more new materials. You do not need the article if you already have knowledge of the structure of the Catholic church. If you do not, then the article may be helpful. The best part of the article is the one which details various schools of thought within the church of Sigmar. The description is much too short, but it shatters the image of a coherent cult. A new career, that of the flagellant, is detailed in the article. This career is in my opinion of only very limited use, since such a character would only occupy a very small niche within the world.

Stephen Cumiskey wrote an article on the religious history. Again, the informations are too brief and too much centered around the church for Sigmar, probably because it was done parallel with the article before. The article has some nice ideas, but I did not find it too convincing. An interesting approach was found by Garrett Lepper in his article on Geheimnisnacht and Hexennacht. I enjoyed the descriptions of Garrett. The article builds atmosphere and discusses something that was virtually shunned by any other material. The only problem with the article is that it gives detailed rule for game-play during the two nights. This somehow works against the atmosphere Garrett has just created. I would have preferred if the actual effects would have only been hinted at. But this is personal taste. Over all a good article. The next article is Ouroboros "The Lore of the Ranger". In my eyes the down-point of the whole issue. The authors gives thirty new or modified skills for the ranger careers. As the authors says the skills should be restricted to ranger careers. When you consider that the rulebook has 131 skills (the spell skills not included) this shifts the balance very much in favour of the ranger. Some of the skills are also very dubious. I do not see a need for joinery, which allows the character to make small pieces of furniture ("he was a great warrior and hero, but his name will ever be remembered for his fine spice racks"). Too many of the skills are not necessary. They could be created ad hoc with the help of attributes and a skill is not necessary here. If someone is really looking for more skills, I advise him of using Rolemaster instead of WFRP.

As all Warpstone issues, an adventure finishes this issue. Much to my enjoyment it is an adventure of investigation and less and adventure of battle. Set in the city of Nuln, the PCs have to find the secret behind a city official, who is a necromance (what else?). The adventure is nice, although I could not test it so far. The only difficulty may be that the adventure is tied into a corset of a sequence of time, which might make it difficult top play. But as I said I have not played it.

Over all the issue is good. There are a number of articles that are really worth reading. However a number of articles are a disappoint (church of Sigmar) or of only limited interest (the lore of the ranger). You should have a look before buying this issue. I cannot give you unlimited recommendation to buy it.

Rating: Stun Factor 5

Review by Leif U. Schrader

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Warpstone 16

Issue Nr.16 was an issue looked forward to more than any other else. This is not so much because of the issue itself, but because it starts the Talabheim series. But more on that later.

Timothy Eccles opens the issue, after the usual titbits of news and short reviews, with his column "The Correspondent". His approach is, as almost always, excellent, but alas too little space. He writes about cultural differences between the various regions of the empire. He mentions the most relevant points to play on regionalisms (currency, language). This could easily fill more than a dozen pages, unfortunately Tim's column is as always restricted to two pages. Of these two pages more than one page is filled with what Tim calls "nuggets". These are certain term, words or ideas that have specific meaning for people in the old world. This is nice too read, but appears to be a little uninspired. I wish if more room would have been given to general information on cultural differences and less space for these "nuggets". The various terms appear too much torn apart and out of their context. A great approach and a nice article, but with considerable flaws.



The next article comes from Toby Pilling. It is an four page lamentation about the often negative view of the Doomstones campaign. Some things are interesting, but the article cannot really decide if it wants to be a guideline for running the campaign or an extended review. It fails in both cases. For a review it is much too long and contains too little information of the campaign. For the former the ideas are too vague and general. The only thing you really can learn from the article is that the author likes the Doomstones campaign. Not very much for four pages.

An interesting article by Eccles, Foody, Huntington and Keane follows. It is one of the most unusual articles I have read so far in a role-playing magazine. The article discusses if murder is justifiable. From a jurists point of view I can say it is never justifiable, but manslaughter may be. The reason for the article was a situation in this group where a halfling killed a watchman. The story is told out of the eyes of the different people and what they think about it. Looking at it from a legal point of view I say that the halfling committed murder, not manslaughter, and that there were no mitigating circumstances apparent. Nevertheless it is interesting to read, especially how Tim, who played the halfling, desperately tries to justify what his character has done. Although the article is only concerned with this particular incident, it may provoke players to think a little bit about their character's actions.

Then comes the centre-piece of this issue. The first part of the description of Talabheim. All I can say about it, is that it is excellent. The whole project will cover between four and five issues, so at the end you will have a full-size supplement of Talabheim. The article discusses in the first part the surrounding land of Talabheim, basically the crater, history, politics, law and order and religion. Each section was written by different authors and therefore the quality differs somewhat. Nevertheless all sections are far above average. There is however no light without shadow. One odd aspect of Talabheim is that it is in the middle of a crater. Sure this is GW-fault, but it does affect the plausibility of Talabheim a little bit. It reminds me a lot of Dien Bien Phu. The authors clearly have no reason why the city is not wiped away easily, they just say a few times that the rim of the crater cannot be scaled. This situation is the heritage of GW and should not be blamed on the article. Another minor flaw of the description is that the legal system presented is too much rooted in the common law, in fact is a more or less direct take-over of the common law system of Great Britain into Talabheim. This idea, which I have criticised often on the past, fits little to the general "germanic" nature of the old world. Despite these minor flaws, and there are many other that would exceed the space of this review, the article and the whole project is ambitious and so far has fulfilled the expectations.

A rather odd feature is a play by Mark Bell. It is definitely not everyone's cup of tea, certainly it is not mine. Nevertheless it is well written and may be interesting for others. An adventure by John Foody is the next article. The adventure is set in Talabheim and can be used to introduce the players to Talabheim. The adventure plays very much on the specific political situation of Talabheim, that is dominated by the nobility and the guilds have little influence. The adventure has a number of interesting NPCs and gives a great example of the political situation. The biggest disadvantage is that the players have very much freedom and an inexperienced GM may have problems to control them. The adventure is worth reading even if only for its illustration of the political situation.

This issue of Warpstone is certainly worth buying. The Talabheim project is impressive and I hope that it will continue on its high standard in the future.

Rating: Stun Factor 9

Review by Leif U. Schrader

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Heart of Chaos

So, at last, the Doomstones campaign is complete. Heart Of Chaos is somewhat unusual, as it needs to be looked at under three criteria.

Firstly, in terms of the rest of the Doomstones campaign. Here it does, indeed, actually conclude the campaign, tying together many loose threads, and actually letting the players know roughly what it is that is going on. I would have perhaps have liked to have seen the campaign's earlier threads worked into the book a little more, but given the multiple choices that PCs could have taken, this would perhaps not be overly feasible. Only two minor points concerning population numbers in certain areas arise, but these can easily be adjusted as desired.

Next, we look at the book in terms of WFRP adventures. Here we see it being more in the vein of 'classic' WFRP material, with moral dilemmas and dire consequences. Some slight high fantasy elements are contained, but are twisted by the darker slant of WFRP.

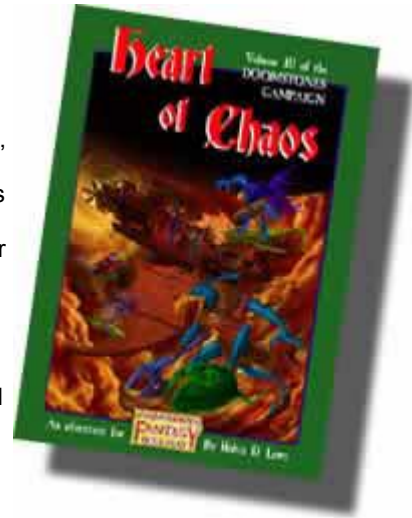
Finally in terms of a game supplement, we find that it is well written, giving detailed advice on running plot crucial elements, along with more generic advice.

However, somewhat disappointingly, a number of flaws are present. Most glaring of which is the miss-editing of the book whereby a couple of notes directed to the editor are printed, maps diagrams and tables are not labelled and/or in the wrong place, and one paragraph is split into two by two intervening pages. It would have been nice to have had the handouts collated at the back of the book, as with other Doomstones books, and possibly to have had the 'Crossing The Boarder' scenario (Originally in Hogwash #3, now available from the Hogshead web site) included. This kind of attention to detail could, I feel, have made the product a feasible purchase at the same cost as the original Doomstones books.

If you already have the other parts of the campaign, then Heart Of Chaos is worth the money, doubly if you don't own Realms Of Chaos and want certain info from the back. If you don't already own any of the Doomstones campaign, then Heart Of Chaos is probably best purchased last. (slev)

Stun Factor: 6

Review by P. Slevin



Warpstone 17

Warpstone has had two significant changes in its publishing history. The first would be when Hogshead took up distribution of Warpstone while the second just recently happened: the publishing of their Talabheim series. It looks to be a bit of an undertaking involving a dozen writers or so... but more on this series later in the review.



This issue begins with reviews, the first review being "Bergsburg: On-line WFRP Project". As of late, Warpstone has been giving this project a bit of help, mailing some related flyers to Warpstone subscribers. There isn't much to review about the project since it is a work in progress, but the attention devoted to the project might help rouse interest in the project. The next review is a bit of a shock: SLA Industries, Nightfall Games sci-fi something or other with attitude (and wholesale ripped off images from other sources). Warpstone strays from being a WFRP magazine to being a Hogshead magazine. The review is brief but fair, but I found myself being torn in whether or not the space would have been better served elsewhere. The last review is Death's Dark Shadow - or mostly a short brief revisit of an earlier review. Not of much use other than to remind you to that Hogshead has released it and to read the older Warpstone review for more information. Overall the Warpstone reviews were uninspired, but in light of the dearth of products to review, this is understandable.

The Warpstone Fragments that follow are of less interest than usual, a blurb on the Dying Earth series, Lord of the Rings, gaming conventions, and a review of Dungeons and Dragons the movie. None of these I consider particularly newsworthy or relevant.

Tim Eccles' The Correspondent column is a bit of a misfit in the magazine, lacking a definite sense of purpose. In the past it's served as a platform to voice the author's opinion on issues previously covered on the WFRP email list while other times a hodge podge of various ideas. The better columns are neither, tackling a facet of the Old World background, but in these cases the information is poorly served in the context of the column since the material could be expanded upon in a longer and substantial article. This column is a perfect example: Imperial Law. Tim Eccles suggests that the current existing tables in the various rulebooks fail to convey a full feel of the law, but it seems strange to suggest that this very brief, dense, and jargon ridden column in small print is hardly an improvement, or hardly legible for that matter. A longer article covering the topic in a more digestible manner with numerous role-play suggestions and adventure hooks would have been more fitting.

The Nine Tribes: The Empire Before Sigmar is an interesting article, albeit more in concept than in practice. The article outlines the eight (nine? twelve?) tribes of Sigmar in the Empire's past, providing a map for the area where they historically resided. The article is derailed initially by commentary about real world versus Old World comparisons, a needless comparison. Rather than entirely confine itself to history as a meaningless if interesting academic exercise, the article looks at the relevance of history and provides adventure seeds related to history. Notable was the art and related column showing some of the dress and character of the Empire's early tribal peoples, a nice touch. On a side note, I found the use of footnotes in this article and the earlier Imperial Law column very distracting - the information should be incorporated into the body of the work itself or excised. Still, the article is a nice contribution to the body of WFRP material.

Excerpts from Doktor Brauer's Book of Fable and Fancy, Nuln College Press, 2503: Background from the Felix and Gotrek Books provides a look at some of the detail and background of current WFRP fiction. It would be a nice addition, yet it is marred by one egregious omission: the book and page numbers of the snippet of information so that others can reference it for themselves or examine the information in greater depth in its context. Rather than proving a resource, this article is merely a curiosity. The good Doktor Brauer should know better: any academic should cite his sources!

Forms of Address by Toby Piling is a simple article which provides detail to enrich the background.

Blue Blood on the Carpet by N. Arne Dam and Alfred Nunez Jr. is a redundant article covering nobility, especially in light when the subject has been covered in an earlier White Dwarf series and in Apocrypha Now. The article reiterates noble hierarchy, provides more history on how nobility emerged historically while providing far less detail on how one actually enters the nobility, gives a brief and far too simplified description of noble obligations and privileges, discusses briefly the art of intrigue, marriage, inheritance, and the decline of a noble house. After this superficial description of material already covered in various other sources the article improves by offering three adventure seeds that prove far more useful to the GM. The article concludes with description of the Von

Bildhofens, less an examination of a prominent Imperial family since it is comprised solely of bios of some of the family's historically important figures.

Tim Eccles' The Simple Coin succeeds where his earlier contribution failed. This article works on a number of levels, first and foremost by examining an all too often overlooked aspect of the world: the coin. It provides a short history, moving on to the nature of coinage, although it sadly becomes mired in a digression on the Kislev Mark with takes up half the paragraphs. Coin manufacture is touched upon, although more detail on how mints are run and more information on the fixing of specie to bullion would have been nice. The information on inflation is particularly relevant to the GM and has profound consequences for PCs, and the author wisely touches upon later. Sadly, the article breaks down into yet another hodge-podge of arbitrary categories and random associations, the headings follow little rhyme or reason: Old Coins, Banking Institutions, Finance Houses, Church of Vernea, Gnomes, Dwarfs, Sea Elves, Value, How to Inspect Coins, and Paper Money. The content is great, the organization leaves much to be desired. Also noticeably missing is information on counterfeiters. This excellent article concludes with an examination of coins in scenarios with serious repercussions for PCs. Enhancing the entire article is art illustrating coins with commentary.

The coins article could have been the best article in the magazine, if not for the following article: Talabheim Part Two - the Noble Heart. All too often work by a dozen people or so feels disjointed, but to date the Talabheim articles have been a triumph for Warpstone, one of its defining moments.

It begins with an introduction to demi-humans in Talabheim. The information on dwarfs and close association with the cult of Sigmar proves a liability here in Talabheim - a particularly clever and insightful twist. Sadly the other races were neglected, halfling and elves getting three sentences each, with gnomes non-existent.

The portion on the watch is interesting and the limitations in which they work under add complexity. The details on the Secret Protection Office however rang false: the idea that a band of undercover commoners could potentially arrest anyone (including nobles) at any time. A curious power if you remember that the city is conservative and the nobles hold tenaciously to their power.

The bulk of the article covers the city districts at the center of the city, interspersed with text boxes on Custom and Law endow the world with credibility, history, and eccentricity; their inclusion in the article deeply enrich the world in a way that neither the Marienburg book nor the Middenheim book ever did. The descriptions of the districts themselves are good, if somewhat uneven. Some locations are given too much detail (the rather cliché beggar-king), some are given great detail (Saint Tomas of the Snows), and others are given too little detail (Shrine of Ranald the Protector). Sadly missing is any key to where the locations are in the city, a troubling oversight. The article finishes with an adventure that isn't tied in any way to the actual contents of the article itself - taking place outside Talabheim. The adventure seed is one of moral ambiguity concerning a rape, and while interesting, it seems like something more directly related to the article could have been used instead.

Reviewed: The Professionals is Tim Eccles' look at Dragon, Dungeon, White Dwarf, Games Unplugged, Valkyrie, and Knights of the Dinner Table. Tim Eccles holds them up to high standards, savages the magazines for their failings. However I question the inclusion of this article in Warpstone, firstly its not directly related to WFRP, secondly, it seems less a review of the magazines and more an exposition on the sad state of gaming these days. Eccles' complaints have been voiced for over a decade.

The obligatory scenario is in here as well, John Foody's In the Name of Love. To be honest, I don't care for scenarios and hardly read them. This one I did read, and enjoy. First of all there were no agents of chaos or dark gods, no grand conspiracies, no ancient legacies, simply human folly and misunderstanding. There was a minor typo overlooked in editing where "beggar" is used instead of "pedlar". My biggest complaint is not entirely relevant: the case involves a rape, or in actuality a lie about rape. The article may seem to feed off the myth that if a woman cries "rape", she's probably lying or secretly really wanted it. On the other other hand, others may feel that the adventure plays in well with a grim world and that such things do occur. Reservations aside, it's a short and excellent adventure, and in my opinion one of the best the magazine has had to offer.

It finally concludes with The Forum, Warpstone's letter pages.

In summation, this issue has its disappointments, notably the reviews, a misguided column, and a superfluous article on nobility. The Nine Tribes article was a creative addition, yet the real merit lies in the article on coins and Talabheim. These two articles alone make the issue worth the cover price. The Talabheim article itself easily rivals the earlier official published city sourcebooks even in its unpolished state, quite an accomplishment for the Warpstone team. This article of Warpstone, and the last, are excellent additions your WFRP collection.

Rating: Stun Factor 8

Review by Garrett Lepper

Town Cryer 15

The latest issue of Fanatics magazine for Mordheim, city of the damned arrived shortly before the launch of STRIKE TO STUN.

The first thing which catches your attention is the headline "Girl Power". No, Town Cryer hasn't become a teeny-magazine, the headline hints at the new Amazon Warband for the Lustria setting. As always, the magazine starts with the obligate Editorial by Steve Hambrook. But after this short introduction, the magazine starts with full throttle, err... I mean full warpstone power. The first chapter is dedicated to Games Workshops summer campaign "Dark Shadows". Now your warbands can explore the misty island of Albion. Although I didn't think that it would be possible to convert the Mordheim rules to a playable Albion-setting, I have to admit that the authors did a great job. With rules for weather, which is an important factor on Albion, the special Terrain (fens and woods), new monsters (fen-beasts and giants) and the Ogham stones you get all the rules you need to play in an Albion-setting. The description of the Dark Emissary and the Truthsayer together with two new spell-lists also adds a special flavour to the game. The three scenarios are also great, each with special rules and a Reward-Table for Albion artefacts. If you also play Warhammer Fantasy Battle and have some special Terrain and Miniatures I strongly recommend you to play some battles with this setting.



The second chapter holds the last part of the Lustria- Cities of Gold setting. To be honest, I disliked the setting in the beginning (see review of TC 13), but it seems that I caught the Lustria-virus: I really think about the possibility of building some Lustria-terrain and collecting one or two Warbands... The articles in Town Cryer 14 and the current issue have especially changed my mind. The introductory article describes three sample settlements which can be used by players as camps. Each settlement offers something special: while the Estalian colonial-town of Santa Magrita has a great market on which common equipment could be purchased cheaper, the Norse settlement of Skeggi offers cheaper Hired Swords. With the Amazons, a new all-women warband is introduced to the Lustria-setting. I wonder why all female warbands have to consist of half-naked pin-up girls with huge breasts and huger weapons. But it seems that this is the fate of females in Fantasy-games... The Amazons are an interesting and dangerous warband. Somehow I have the feeling that the Amazons are the Sisters of Sigmar of Lustria. Like their Mordheim-counterpart, they have access to a wide range of unique artefacts and special skills that can only be used by them. Led by the powerful Serpent Priestess who wields a couple of devastating spells the Amazons can be used as a close-combat warband as well as a shooty warband. A wide range of both hand-to-hand and missile weapons and a couple of special weapons like the starsword or the sunstaff makes them a tough enemy for every other warband in Lustria. Although the idea of a new all-female warband is very intriguing, the wide range of special equipment and an above-average starting profile makes them in my opinion a little bit too powerful for a human warband. The next pages hold the information about new Dramatis Personae for Lustria: First of all there is the renegade Dark-elven Assassin Dijin Katal, a nightmare for all enemies. Then there is the Amazon Priestess Penthesilea, who seems the Lustria version of Bertha Bestrafung and finally the Norse Berserker Drenok Johansen, an awful warrior wielding a huge Battle-axe. The final part of this issue's Lustria-section is a modelling workshop by James Mackay, which describes how to build Rivers and swamps. The drawback of this article is the fact that all pictures of the terrain are only in grayscale.

The next chapter is in my opinion the best one. We all know that Warpstone, or Wyrdstone as it is called by the humans of the Empire hold great powers. It is said that it can turn lead into gold and to lengthen the lifespan of mortals. So why always sell the collected stones to greedy merchants who pay a lousy amount of money for the hard work of collecting? Why not keeping one or two stones for yourself and use its magical powers? Warpstone can make one more powerful by lending its supernatural powers though its use holds great risks. You can turn into a Chaos Spawn or get a mutation. What makes this article so great is the new mutation table which introduces 36 mutations (d66). From Eystalks to Mace-tail, you can find a lot of nice mutations in this table.

In the following chapter a new scenario called "The Mummy" can be found. Although placed in the city of the damned it acts as an introduction to the forthcoming Khemri-setting. Awakened by a Necromancer, the deadly remains of KaHotep, a Tomb King from the lands of Khemri, restlessly haunt the streets of Mordheim, until a warband is able to defeat this foul undead and his minions. The scenario is for 2-6 warbands and should be led by a Game-master who controls the Mummy and its Tomb Guardians. It really makes me curious about the new setting placed in the lands of the dead, which should start in the next Town Cryer.

The last few pages of Town Cryer 15 are dedicated to the Fan letters and the "Watchtower", an overview about all articles ever published in Town-cryer. All in all issue 15 is the best Town Cryer I ever read. For the first time I found almost all articles useful and interesting, especially the Wyrdstone-article and the Mutation-table are of great use for every Mordheim player. I can only recommend this magazine to every player who likes Mordheim or Warhammer-skirmish and I hope that the following issues will be of the same quality like Town Cryer 15. (nc)

Rating: Stun Factor 9

Review by Natasch a Chrobok