

Realms of Sorcery

After nearly sixteen years of waiting, the ever forthcoming Realms of Sorcery will be released within the next weeks. There is a question every WFRP-player in the world asks: Will it really meet the expectations after such a long time of waiting?

STRIKE TO STUN will give you an answer to this questions! **STRIKE TO STUN** chief editor Natascha Chrobok belongs to the group of lucky individuals, who were able to read the book before its official release date to give you a detailed review of Realms of Sorcery:

I have to admit that I was not sure what to expect. But after reading it I know the answer: Yes! It was worth to wait! Realms of Sorcery is superb. On more than 250 pages you can find tons of background material, rules for casting and creating spells, creating magic items, over 350 new spells and much more. The Cover and the artwork are professional and very Warhammer-like. The book is available in three versions: a hard-cover, a soft-cover and a limited leatherbound version. Those who expect that Realms of Sorcery is just a collection of new rules and spells will be disappointed... Realms of Sorcery is more than that!



The book starts with an introduction about magick. The first chapters describe much about the ancient wizards of the High elves, who learned their arts at the knees of the Old Ones, the first incursion of Chaos thousands of years ago and the great incursion of Chaos during the time of Magnus the pious, who asked the High Elves of Ulthuan for help to fight back the hordes of Chaos. With the assistance of the High Elf Teclis the modern forms and colleges of Magick were found. Also described in the first chapters is the theory about the essence of magick: according to Teclis, Magic is the pure energy of Chaos, which enters the world via the Warp gates at the poles in the Northern and Southern Chaos wastes. When entering the world, this pure energy divides into eight "colours" of magick which flood through the world. The chaotic origin of pure magic is the reason that magicians can easily be corrupted by practicing Magick. Only the most skilled of the High Elf Wizards are able to control all colours of Magick, the lesser races often can control one or two colours without being corrupted. This is the reason why the Imperial Colleges of Colour Magick only teach their members the knowledge about one colour-aspect. This minimizes the chance that the wizards will be corrupted by Chaos. Practitioners of Dark Arts like Necromancers or Demonologists draw their energies from the pure magick which easily corrupts them.



In the following the book describes the typical life of a wizard. You learn much about the hard way from apprenticeship over journeymanship to finally attain the mastership of wizardry. A new thing is that every wizard needs an official license which has to be issued by official institutions (town council).

In the next chapters there is a description of the various archetypes of wizards. I will try to give you a short overview of what you have to expect:

The first chapter describes the so-called Hedge-wizards, self-taught magic-users which have no official education. They can brew love-potions, look after farmer Millers sick cow, work as midwives and can be found living in small cottages in the wood, accompanied by a black cat or a raven: one can say that they are the typical witches ... Although they are very limited in their powers, as they often never had a teacher or even never learned to read, they are not bound by any hindrances like oaths and the like in their access to various spells. This means that they can learn nearly all spells available, although this is very expensive for them (400 xp per spell per spell level). Hedge-wizards also can learn higher level spells than their actual level is. This means, a lvl 1 hedge-wizard would be able to learn and cast a lvl 4 spell although he would have to pay 1600 points to acquire this spell and it would be very exhausting to cast it.

In the next section information about Battle Magick can be found. The chapter describes the various colleges and guilds of Battle Magick. It is very impressive that the authors managed to include both, classical WFRP-magic-guilds as well as the newer WFB colleges of Magick. From the Wizards and Alchemists guild of Middenheim over the University college of Nuln to the Imperial Colleges of Magick in Altdorf, every Guild and college is described in detail. The main focus of this chapter lies in the description of the Imperial colleges of Colour-magick. Although the wizards of the Imperial Colleges are bound to only one colour of magick, they are highly specialized in it. This means that they are able to rise to level 5 wizards! Each College gets his own description (history, background, skills, spell access, noteworthy members, etc.). All battle magicians have access to petty and battle magick spells, the members of the Imperial colleges also have access to the highly specialized spells of their own college which makes them very powerful and unique among the other battle magicians.

The description of the Art of Illusion can be found in the next chapter. Unlike Battle Wizards, who are masters in the art of war, the Illusionists specialize in confusing and irritating the minds of others. The chapter describes the history and background of Illusionists in the Empire. Additionally, the two major guilds of illusionists also get a detailed description: the Empire college of Illusions placed in the farmlands outside of Übersreik, and the college of "Lugenheim", the home of lies.



At the following pages the reader can find the background about Elementalism. The history of this form of magick predates the time of Magnus and Teclis and is very different from the common form of Battle Magick. At the Eldritch University of Nuln, and the four Colleges of Elementalism, the Earth college in Stirland, the Air college in the grey mountains, the Fire College in Bechhafen, Ostermark and the Water College placed on the Wasserburg (Water castle) near river Teufel in Reikland, young wizards are introduced into the mysteries of Elementalism. Like Battle Wizards, Elementalists can become level 5 Magicians and with their highly specialized, elemental-based spells they can become very powerful. The new Elementalist career is a serious alternative to the ordinary Battle Wizard and I guess many players will choose this career.

The next chapter treats with one of the most unattractive career of Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay: the Alchemists. Because of their limited access to Spells, this career always was something like a stepchild of the game. I wonder if somebody ever played an alchemist (besides of some Hardcore-role-players, like Teka, a player one of in my groups...). But with the new description in Realms of Sorcery, the Alchemist becomes more attractive and powerful. Although he may not be good in casting spells, he is a specialist in brewing potions, elixirs and combustibles as well as a master chemist. A wide range of specialist spells makes the Alchemist unique among the other wizards. Although he might be no Spell wielding Battle-machine, the "new" Alchemist will become a useful member of every gaming party.

The cold and harsh lands of Kislev have created their own kind of Magick: Ice magic. It is clear that a land, in which winter reigns nearly half of the year, influenced the evolution of Magick. The Kislevite Shamans practice a unique form of magick, which is based on the effects of frost and winter. The strong influence of winter makes the Ice-magicians more powerful during the winter-months, but weakens them in the summer months. Also they are more powerful, the more northward they come. This dependence on seasons and geographical location makes the Kislevite shamans a very intriguing career.



Besides of the major colleges of Battle magic and elementalism, there are many small guilds, colleges and secret societies of magic-users throughout the Empire. In the Chapter "Minor Cults", RoS takes a look at these small societies. From the College of Öbelstein, which concentrates on Zone-magic to the Children of Teclis, a secret society of Mages who believes in the heretic theory, that chaos can only be fought by those who understood it, each of the smaller colleges is described in detail.

On the next pages the description of the Masters of Magic, the Elves can be found. The main focus lies on Wood Elf Magic, which is very different to the magic available to humans. Besides of the information about Wood elf mages there is also a description of Dryads and NPC-High Elven Wizards (their magick is far too powerful to give it into the hands of the players...).

The following two chapters handle Runes. There has to be made a distinction between the Rune Magic of Dwarfs and the Rune Mastery some humans acquire. Being a race with almost no magical aptitude, the dwarfs created their own techniques to make use of the magic which floods through the world. By inscribing runes, the Rune smiths, as the dwarfen magicians are known, channel the powers of magic to create powerful artefacts. The chapter about Dwarfen Rune Magic describes the careers of Rune smiths (Apprentice, Rune smith, Master Rune smith and Rune Lord) as well as the forging of Runes. Very different than Dwarfen Rune Magic is the human science of Rune Mastery. Although it has its origins in dwarfen Rune Magic, the human form is weaker and lacks of the permanence of the dwarfish art. Based on the theories of the wizard Klausner, who was taught the secrets of Runes by an old Dwarfen Rune smith thousand years ago, the practice of Rune Mastery is very risky. Not only that it isn't tolerated by the Imperial Colleges and the Inquisition, a Rune Master has to live in constant fear of the Dwarfs, who see the existence of Rune Mastery as a violation of their ancient knowledge and believe, that Klausner stole their ancient secrets. Both, the Dwarfen Rune smith as well as the human Rune Master are very interesting careers and will add much flavour to the Game.

The secrets of the forbidden Arts are described on the next few pages. All forbidden Arts have in common that they draw their energy on the pure essence of chaos. Besides of Demonology and Necromancy there are the arts Dark Magic and Chaos Magic. While Dark Magic draws its power from the purest sources of Chaos, the art of Chaos Magic is granted by one of the Chaos Powers (Tzeentch, Slaanesh, Nurgle). Needless to say that all forbidden Arts are corrupting everybody who is insane enough to practice it.

Skaven-magic is very different to other forms of Magic. Being a race created by Chaos, the Skaven are a race

with a high affinity to Warpstone. The dark and corrupting powers of this materialized form of chaos lends the Skaven Sorcerers the energy they need to cast spells. In the Chapter about Skaven Magic there is a description of the Grey Seers, the powerful ruling caste within the Skaven Society as well as the description of the Sorcerers of Clan Pestilence and Clan Skyre. Also, there is a description of Warpstone Weapons like the Skaven Jezzails, the poison wind globes and the Warp fire Throwers. The description of the Horned Rat, the god of the Skaven completes this chapter.

Another form of Magic is Greenskin or Waaagh! Magic. This special form of magic practiced by Orc and Goblins shamans works very different than other types of magic. The power of a goblinoid shaman depends on the power of the Waaagh! This means, the shaman depends on the presence of goblinoid minds: the more blood lusty goblinoids are around, the more powerful is the magic, a shaman can wield. Unfortunately, this power can become greater than the shaman can handle. In the worst case it can make the shaman explode...

It seems that presence of Magick automatically attracts the attention of Witch Hunters. And what would be a book about Magic without a description of its greatest enemies. Describing the history and background of Witch hunters, this small section also introduces a new career: the Exorcist. This highly specialised Wizards devote their lives in hunting down ghosts, daemons and those who would summon them. Although the range of spells available for them is limited to Defensive and Banishment spells, this Wizards can become a real menace to supernatural beings like Daemons.

The next chapters treat the magic and spells itself. The Chapter "Spell Casting and Creation" informs about the difference between spells and rituals (which take longer to cast but are more powerful), the performing of spells (when whispering a spell there is a chance that it will not work), how to resist spells and how to research and create new spells. Within the Chapter "Magic Items" a wide range of new magical artefacts is introduced to the game as well as the rules for creating Magical Items can be found. On the next 70 pages over 350 new spells from all categories are described. Starting with a wide range of new petty magic spells, some of them useful, some of them funny (my favourite is Butterfingers, who causes the target to drop everything held in hand) the Spells-section describes hundreds of interesting spells. Much of the new Battle Magic Spells have been previously released in old WFRP-supplements like The Restless Dead, Drachenfels or the old Warhammer Companion. But also a lot of new specialist spells for the Colleges of Colour Magick, new Elemental spells, new Illusions, a section about Dwarfen Runes, a second one about Rune Mastery, new Necromantic Magick, Ice Magic, Waaagh magic, Skaven Magic, Chaos Rituals and, and and..... Most of the Spells are useful and were created with much love in details. The only drawback I can see is that some of the spells can be recognized as conversions of WFB-spells. The whole section is very inspiring and full of interesting details. One of the most interesting spell I found in Realms of Sorcery is the ritual of the Liche, which describes how a Necromancer can become a Liche.



The book finishes with a chapter about familiars and a section with general hints for the game master how to handle magic in the game. Especially the later section is in my opinion a little bit too small and could have handled the topic in more detail. An Index of the various spells and where they can be found on the last pages rounds completes the book.

After reading Realms of Sorcery I have to say that RoS is the best thing Hogshead ever produced (besides of the WFRP book and the Enemy within campaign, which are both reprints). Although I don't agree with everything I have to say that most of the material is superb. The book is clearly arranged, full of nice artwork and holds tons of interesting background material. The texts are easily written and you will enjoy every page. Those who expected a lot of additional rules might be disappointed: the very strength of "Realms of Sorcery" lies in the description of the background, which is in my opinion more important for a good role-playing game than hundreds of senseless rules which needlessly complicate the game. What really fascinated me is the fact that Hogshead managed the acrobatic act to include the Warhammer Fantasy Battle background without destroying the balance or the flavour of the game. Since the first release of Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay the background of the Warhammer World changed significantly and it is not easy to create a compromise between the old and the new background. But it seems that the Authors managed it!

All in all I have to admit that waiting for nearly 16 years was worth every day. Okay, other Role-playing systems might have more spells or more detailed rules but I knew no game which has a so detailed background. It is clear that not everybody will like everything within the book, but the long time of waiting made it really hard to meet all expectations. I thought long about which ranking I should award to Realms of Sorcery. It is not perfect, some things are still missing, but on the other side it is the best product I have seen since a long time. But finally I decided to give it a Stun Factor of 10, the best ranking in the STRIKE TO STUN-ranking system. I can recommend Realms of Sorcery to every WFRP-player, it is really worth to buy it. A last word to those who will not be satisfied with Realms of Sorcery and who do not agree with my opinion about it: Do you really know what you want?

Deaths Dark Shadow

Death's Dark Shadow is a reprint of an old Flame title. As far as I can say little, if anything, has changed. This made me hope to get a fairly decent adventure. After reading it, I am however a little undecided. But one after the other.

First: The cover. I don't know what it should picture. To me it appears like two armoured ballet-dancers in the wood. The motive is just, well, strange. Maybe it is a question of taste and I just have the wrong taste for the cover picture. Maybe not.

The contents of the book reminded me a little bit of the old MERP-adventures. They only seemed to have produced mini-campaigns. These were generally set around a location and had loose connections with it each other. This seems to be what Sargent had in mind when planning the adventure. The subtitle is in fact "adventure pack" which suits the product much more.



The book starts with a fairly detailed description of the town of Kreutzhofen. This town lies in the far south west corner of the Empire. It is described as a relatively important trade town. Kreutzhofen has connections to Bretonnia via a mountain pass, to the Border Princes via the Winter's Teeth Pass and to Tilea via, now listen carefully, an underground river more than a day's travel long. To call the later rather unrealistic is to call water rather wet. Anyway, what is a little more surprising is that Kreutzhofen is said to be trade town. Then you would expect storehouses and merchants. Surprisingly more people in the village are old women that specialise in gossip than merchants, in fact there are as many demonologists and tomb robbers as there are merchants. I would have expected more merchants, people that have a warehouse in Kreutzhofen and not come every few months. But since there are almost no warehouses there is probably no room for merchants, which brings me to the question how Kreutzhofen can be a trade town.

The description itself is okay. Most houses are displayed with a map and every house of a description, although somewhat short. The people of Kreutzhofen may appear to be fairly cliché. A great number of the women are young and beautiful and most of them have affairs from which their husbands know nothing. Most of the rest are old and tell gossips. Of course you have a tomb robber, a demonologist, a usurer (the above mentioned merchant) who wants to take over the village and one of the beautiful women, a mad scientists, an incompetent militia captain, an artist's colony and a Tilea prince living under disguise. The description is okay, as said above, but the citizens of a town should be a little bit more average. When creating a town it is not really appropriate to make every citizen a possible adventure hook. It is more like a looking glass of warhammer careers.

The following pages include a description of the area around Kreutzhofen, which includes a small village, a farm and other locations. Again the description is not really bad, but too much was put into too little space. There are probably more strange things in and around Kreutzhofen than western Europe today. Short paragraphs on law and order, religion, trade and commerce and customs follow. The are okay. Especially the last one can be useful in making the town more vivid and give the players some memorable moments.

Kreutzhofen of course does not stand alone as a town. A great part of the book is filled with adventures. These are broken down into mini-adventures, adventure hooks and one larger adventure. To start with the mini-adventures, the emphasis is clearly on mini here. Most of them probably do not deserve the name adventure. They are merely encounters. Other are extremely short. For example in one adventure the PCs basically have to follow a barge of kidnappers in the underground river. There is little place for investigation before the chase begins. How long can you stretch such a chase before it becomes boring. Depending on the time the fight with kidnappers takes, I would estimate the time of the adventure of around twenty minutes to an hour. Other are a little longer and may fill a complete session. The adventure hooks are little better. Most of them are just too short to serve as a decent adventure. Of course there are exceptions and some are really nice. A complete adventure called "the curse of the Reichenbachs" follows. The start of the adventure is pretty nice. Unfortunately it is heavily influenced by Mary Shelly's Frankenstein, an idea already exploited in Death on the Reik. I was a little surprised to see it again in this book. If you drop that part it may really make a good adventure.

Another section of the book includes some extra locations. Basically these are adventure location as they all serve as climax points for an adventure. One of these locations makes little sense to me, as it is just a location. A tower with some monsters and some treasure. Two are set in dungeons, of which one adventure appears to be

extremely deadly to me, unless a skeleton major hero, two earth elementals (size 5), two spectres, two wraiths and two wights sound like easy prey to you.

No matter what you think of the adventure, the biggest drawback in my view is that they have no real connection to the village. They could be set anywhere. It would have been great to see an adventure that is based on a local customs. Or the special location on three trade routes. However the adventure are standard adventure randomly set in Kreutzhofen. This is the difference between the MERP-mini-campaigns, that I really loved, and this adventure pack. The book can possibly best used before the Doomstones campaign, as Winter's Teeth Pass can be reached via Kreutzhofen. One or two short episodes can warm the players up, before they are send into the quest for the four stones.

It is a book that I will probably never pick out of the shelf again. It is not a book that has enraged me for the money I have spend, but it is not really interesting. The town is too overloaded with stereotypes and the adventure are just put together uninspired. Although I did not really like it, some descriptions and ideas are not bad. Therefore I gave it a Stun-factor of four, but see it with a big minus. (Is)

Arcanes Magiques

Most people agree that WFRP's Magic system is its weakest part. From a role-player's point of view, it suffers from four main defects. Firstly, all but a few spells are designed for combat. Magic manipulating social interaction or assisting investigative adventuring hardly exists in WFRP. Even the illusionists, who are usually supposed to be trickster mages, apparently use their spells merely to confuse their foes in combat. Obviously, this is Games Workshop's tabletop heritage. Secondly, and partly as a consequence of this battle-mindedness, the use of WFRP's spells is very narrowly predefined. Spells like Sounds, whose effects can be adapted to the situation, are sadly too few in number. Thus creative role-playing of wizard PCs is all but encouraged. Thirdly, many ingredients of higher-level spells tend to be so rare they hardly seem to exist, which either makes those spells useless or suggests the existence of High Fantasy magic shops and guilds stacked to the roof with giants' scalps. Fourthly, the system fails to distinguish clearly between the spell use of wizards and priests, although it is stated that the latter receive the gift of magic directly from their gods.



Given all those problems and the fact that after more than 10 years, we are still waiting for Realms of Sorcery to be published, the fan-based Arcanes Magiques certainly has the potential to fill a few gaps. 'Le Grimoire', the French WFRP fanzine, published this supplement as the first of a number of special issues. It features a cover in colour and 93 text pages. While the book's layout is rather patchy, sometimes making it rather difficult to notice when one article ends and another starts, the illustrations are of a very high quality.

The volume starts with two short articles on the Slann and the different planes of existence. Both issues are desperately in need of clarification, however the texts in Arcanes Magiques are too sketchy to do anything more than further blurring. A piece on immortality research follows, describing an herbalist, a doctor and a priestess of Morr finding ways and means to elude death. All of these are useful when read as adventure seeds, possibly spawning scenarios of the 'mad scientist' type. However, it is my opinion that the meaning of undeath have been stretched far enough in Something Rotten in Kislev.

Inevitably, given the name of the fanzine, there is a section on grimoires in the supplement. Le Grimoire's earlier issues tended to focus on underdeveloped parts of the Warhammer World such as the Southlands, Lustria or Araby, and consequently some of the grimoires described appear to be rather exotic to the Empire-based GM. Nevertheless it is nice to have grimoires described as more than just the most convenient way of learning new spells. These grimoires have a creator, a history, and - more often than not - a will of their own. Thus the "Book of Tizzicato", the "Goblinomicon" or the "Deeds of the Trickster King" make not only powerful and potentially dangerous magical artefacts, but also inspiring material for adventures.

Following this, a lengthy text describes the trial against an allegedly heretical elementalists. The story is basically about how prejudiced people are against magic, and elementalists magic in particular, but it also details some differences between Druids and elementalists. Two magic careers, the Archmage and the Runemaster, are described after this, both providing some opportunities for very, very high-level characters. The ensuing bits on

runes, wands and magical artefacts are again too short to provide any significant information, apart from the fact that WFRP is not in need of flashy new magic material.

The second half of Arcanes Magiques consists of a list of new spells for wizards, elementalists, necromancers, demonologists, illusionists, alchemists and clerics. Some of these can indeed fill the gaps I mentioned above: they are spells for players who prefer role-playing over the mere multiplying of combat. Simple, but effective spells like invisibility, projection of voice and image, charm, ventriloquism or manipulation of shadows. In other words, spells for the lowly wizard manipulating social situations, infiltrating or hiding in the Warhammer World's grim cities.

Furthermore, some of Le Grimoire's spells are desperately needed to fill logical gaps in WFRP's game world. Have you ever wondered, for instance, why there seem to be quite a lot of people possessed by daemons running about in The Enemy Within Campaign, even though there is no demonologist's spell for directing a daemon into a living human being? Arcanes Magiques fixes that. In fact, there is a number of spells in this volume which NPC mages in WFRP campaigns obviously take for granted, but which can never be learned by player characters, simply because they do not exist officially.

Other spells in the supplement spark that creative potential which the ones in the rulebook lack. "Illusory Illusion", for instance, gives an illusionist the opportunity to have something real look like an illusion. The spell has millions of possible uses and is guaranteed to entail some entertaining role-playing encounters. However, some spells in the list are not quite as ingenious as the one just mentioned. In fact, a few are merely slightly over-powered versions of spells from the rule-book, sometimes adapted for another race. Almost all spells for skaven, for example, seem to be warpstone-versions of ordinary battle magic spells.

Arcanes Magiques is certainly no substitute for the ever-forthcoming Realms of Sorcery. Le Grimoire are neither concerned with the faulty game mechanics, nor do they clarify the mangled magical background of the Warhammer World. As a source of inspiration for scenarios revolving around magical artefacts and wizards, and as a collection of spells ranging from rather useful to absolutely necessary, however, it is worth reading. (mw)

Warpstone 18

Issue Nr.18 has one major improvement: larger fonts. No more ruining your eyes with 8pt. Thus the issue also has fewer articles than other ones, but with 48 pages it appears to be pretty small anyway.

The first article is a review by John Foody. Generally reviews are not something to review. However he presents the various novels republished by "The Black Library", which seems to be a subdivision of GW, which is in charge of bringing some novels that were out of print back to the printer. The review is pretty critical and John certainly does not lift the novels into the sky. It is a good overview for anyone thinking whether they should buy any of these "warhammer classics". The review is rounded by some information of a monthly warhammer comic magazine and a short interview with the "Black Library's" boss: Marc Gascoigne.

The first "true" article was written by Timothy Eccles, who seems to be subscribed to open each issue. This time he tries to develop a possible future of the warhammer world. Were the different nations may develop into, what will happen to certain cults etc. The format is of course highly unusual and of course very speculative. Bringing development into warhammer is also a tricky subject, since the rulebook implies very little social and industrial development and the few changes were made through war. Although interesting to read, Timothy fails to introduce new ideas. His lines of development are more or less taken from our history. So if you do own a book from your history classes in school and the smallest amount of common sense you do not really need this article. The time-span itself makes is virtually unusable for any campaign. Timothy clearly talks about historical development, so that a hundred years are nothing, which of course makes the ideas difficult to incorporate. Although the approach is interesting, the article fails to bring surprising new information or ideas.

Another article by Timothy follows. This is the first part of a multipart article on guilds. A much more rewarding subject. The first article seems to serve as introduction and basics, so there is currently very little to actually use. It is a little disturbing that the article lacks any reference to RoS, although this is very likely to have been available



to the author. So we have to see for the next issue to appropriately evaluate the article.

The next article - I do have scruples to call it an article - comes from Paul Slevin and is announced as an extended Enemy Within-Campaign. Basically the author takes the campaign and adds other adventures in between, e.g. between Power behind the throne and Empire in Flames/Chaos, the PC should be sent to Doomstones. Some of the extensions, just like the one I have just mentioned, appear to be pretty strained. The article is useless for anyone not possessing the old adventure like Lichemaster, the Restless Death or Drachenfels. For those that do, the question is whether someone really wants to send the PCs on such a tour de force. Even if you want to do this, the article gives you little information on how to connect the adventures. For getting connectors like "hire them to take cargo to XXX" I do not pay money.

The following is an interesting article by Robin Low. The subject of the article itself is a philanthropic society called "The Trust" that promotes science by giving money. The description itself is more or less good standard. One or two secrets, extensive descriptions on the place where the society has its place, the main characters etc. All quite good and interesting to read. The only flaw is that the article ignores interaction with guilds and the new colleges of magic a little bit. Nevertheless quite good. What makes this article exceptional is, unfortunately, only found in a small box. The trust wants to further science and the head is a cultist of Tzeentch. Well, that is ordinary for the regular warhammer fan. What is not ordinary in my view is that the cult is not reduced to a number of thugs, but the idea that you can do something bad for good reasons is developed. Sure a researcher may conduct illegal experiments, but what if his goal is not so despicable. In my view this is a great idea and should have detailed more thoroughly. In the hands of a good GM, this can bring a totally new perspective to the game and especially Tzeentch. Three thumbs up for this idea.

The third part of the Talabheim series is the next article. Again well above average. This time the bureaucrat centre of Talabheim is discussed, which is situated in the oddly named Blutberg district (the name hints more on the place for executions than bureaucracy). The article is somewhat overly dominated by the idea of bureaucracy and tradition. This makes the article a little bit tiring. What is worse is that the article is poorly edited. Some places change their name during the article (e.g. what was Spaltenskeller, becomes Spalteskeller later on) and again my old friend of the rape of German languages comes along. Besides persons' names some of places are just poorly chosen, but I get used to it. When the author speaks of Abteilungssteuer, however, he meant the department of taxes. The department of tax would be Steuerabteilung, Abteilungssteuer means "tax for departments". One can argue whether German names are useful or not, but when they are used they should not confuse the reader. Even though I consider the article to be quite good, the poor editing certainly ruins the picture for me. If you do not speak German, you will have less problem and probably more fun with the third part of the Talabheim series.

An adventure by John Foody follows. Set near the Talabec river it is basically a bandit hunt. The well-known plot of bandits hiding in the forest that need to be found is spiced up with a valuable, although very unusual, halfling artefact and some connections with the bandits. The general plot sounds like a lot of fun. No chaos, no exaggerated NPCs. However the plot remains sketchy and very artificial. The begins from the place, which looks a lot like generated for this adventure (which it of course is, but this should not be visible), and ends with the events, that remain colourless. The basic idea promised some fun, but the adventure needs a lot of rework before I could recommend it unconditionally. Which is a pity, since it has the potential to be fun and may be something of surprise when the PCs find the stolen artefact.

As with all Warpstone, this issue is finished with a short story (well, in fact with the letters to the editor, but I will not review them). This story was written by Krpoun (this is not a misspelling and I wonder how it is pronounced). To sum it up: battle. The story is about two people that fight. Beginning from the first and ending in the last line. Pretty cliché. Nothing else, but probably I have not noticed. If you like such stories, this may be as good as any other. If you do not, well, skip the pages.

To come back to the poor editing of the Talabheim-article. There are quite a number of such errors like Abteilungssteuer in the article and I had the impression that this issue had a substantial number of orthographical and grammatical errors and, as you may know, I am not very touchy about it.

This issue of Warpstone is not the best I have ever seen, there is plenty of room to improve. In my view there are only two reasons to buy it: to own all parts of the Talabheim series and Low's article on "The Trust". The rest is average at best. Without the "Trust" it would have deserved a rating, well below five, but I really liked the idea, therefore

(Is)

Warpstone 18

Wha?!?!?!?

I just casually open up the latest Warpstone and something drives me to read the editor's column. And there, to my horror, it is stated that people have written in complaining about the size of the font, as in it is too small. Consequently, the font is bigger, and there is less material. This comes as a shock to me, people wanting less "bang" for their "buck".

Clearly the shock of this did something to my perspective on the magazine. Silly I suppose, but after reading that, this issue seemed a bit lacking in both breadth and depth. I just couldn't shake the feeling that there should have been a little more. I finished the magazine and immediately thought: "Is that all?".

In the choice between content and slightly smaller fonts, I'm always on the side of more content. Shame on Warpstone!



Reviews

The issue begins with reviews of the Black Library materials, a GW division that now produces considerable literature for WFRP. The kid gloves are on apparently, and Mr. Foody is exceedingly generous in his reviews. A cursory glance at some of the offerings of the Black Library, it fails to warn off the unsuspecting... The real treat here is the interview with Marc Gascoigne that proves interesting. Warpstone has done some illuminating interviews that give us some insight into what transpires "behind the curtains" at GW.

Warpstone Fragments

News and bits about the world, the "Corrupting Influence: Best of Warpstone...", Hogshead News, White Dwarf, news about Strike to Stun and Critical Hit. There is also a mini-review of "Battle Cattle" and "Land of Og", whose inclusion here strikes me as odd.

The Correspondent

Tim Eccles' column goes speculative, and proves as nearly boring as any "What If Hitler..." question. I found it dreadfully boring of little relevance to anybody - after all, it's up to the individual GMs to wonder what will happen in the future of the WFRP world - if there even is one. To get the gist of the argument, you merely have to read the Summary at the end, which makes you wonder why this article was stretched out four pages.

Guilds Within the Empire

Tim Eccle's has another go, and once again the difference between his columns and his articles is apparent. This one article is not as good as his earlier article on money, but proves far better organized. It's exhaustive in breadth, but lacking in depth. The latter may be remedied by the future articles that look in greater depth into the subject matter. Next issue promises Medical and Engineer's Guild that should provide greater content.

Now, That's What I Call Chaos

A single page devoted to squeezing, pigeonholing, and cramming every element of every WFRP product in an epic campaign. I disagree with the concept from the start, and I find this article by a fellow Strike to Stun author entirely unnecessary and uninspired.

The Trust

This Warpstone issue proves pretty disappointing, until its saving grace: The Trust. This article goes further than any other piece in revolutionizing the way that we conceive of Chaos. This is quite simply the most pioneering piece published by Warpstone, and its author Robin Low should be applauded.

Yes, the article does deal with the forces of Chaos. For that matter alone, it was a mistake titling this article with the name of the group in question. That aside, this article takes a novel approach to chaos and the goals of a cult. Ideas ooze out of this piece, and this article alone makes this issue worth purchasing.

Up the Ladder

Warpstone has made a point out of not publishing too many careers. Why they would violate this useful guideline for these two careers is beyond me. "Up the Ladder" presents us with two advanced careers. Both suffer from the same thing. There are three cardinal sins most bad careers can commit. The first: no background for the career. Both of these careers have considerable background that enhances the feel of the WFRP world. The second is that the advance schemes are too out of control. Both careers have generous schemes, but none an affront to my sensibilities. It is in the third of these sins that the careers go awry:

Kitchensinkism, where every conceivable career is piled into the career. The Cat Burglar career has a bewildering 21 skills! The "Master Thief" has 25 skills, and an absurd and diverse range of skills. These careers are sprawling messes and sorely lacking in definition. The Cat-Burglar is more an archetype than a career, an interesting NPC rather than a career, while the Master Thief is a poorly conceived career.

Talabheim

I'm still fond of this series, but I am starting to have some misgivings. Every time I read a new article, I have to go back and reread what I read before: simply put, serialization may be the wrong way of providing us with a flourishing background. This would be better served in one issue, or on a website; I suppose they are doing the best with what they have.

The next problem is the disorganized nature of this article: "Abroad in the City". We get a small blurb on Proscribed Cults, a rather longish article on a political movement, and details on Blutberg. It seems to be about power and politics, but it comes across as lacking a real sense of direction.

The article is a bit uninspired until we get to the section on Blutberg, where some of the original atmosphere of the first article is clearly apparent. This section invokes a real sense of what the designers were originally intending: it has a sense of mystery, a well conceived and realized context, and many wonderful small details that make the area unique and intriguing. If there is a second reason to purchase this issue, it is for the Blutberg section alone.

A Recipe for Trouble

I'm never a fan of ready-made scenarios - hardly ever employing them, but this one seems interesting: no chaos, no cultists, lots of intrigue and investigation, and human rather than caricature villains.

The Nature of the Obligation

Hmmm... I'm not a fan of fantasy fiction, I'm still trying to wash the taint off of the GW novels I was compelled to read for WFRP. Rather than read anything more and then write a prejudiced review, I'll simply inform you that the magazine includes a four page short story, and allow you to read it and form your own opinion. If it turns out to be good, email me, maybe I'll go back and read it... maybe...

The magazine concludes with "The Forum". Having finished it, I feel that the "meat" of the fanzine seems (I stress: "seems") to have diminished. Nonetheless, it is a must buy for the sole reason of "The Trust" article in Warpstone 18 alone. For those like me who look forward to the Talabheim article, the bit on Blutberg alone makes it worth purchasing. The Guilds article could turn into an intriguing series of articles as well. All in all, this product is a good buy, although the quality of some of the contributions could be higher.

Rev. Lepper

The Lord of the Rings

There were a lot of rumours out there before the outcoming of the Games Workshop Lord of the Rings tabletop game. The models would be bigger, the models would be smaller, the game would be a skirmish game like Mortheim, it would be a completely new game and so on and on....

Well, the funny thing after opening the LotR-box is - most of the rumours were true! But not completely...



The Rulebook

In there are many nice printed photos of the film. Water for the dried out LoR freak (a friend of mine just cannot get his eyes off the Arwen-photos - I always have a fight getting my rulebook back J). You'll find some good advices for painting and modelling terrain and very important the summary of the tables and rules at the end of the book.

The Models

In fact the models are exactly the same size as Warhammer Fantasy or 40k models (I measured them a few times!) The proportions are just different. The heads and hands of the LotR-modells are more realistic and smaller than the models the Warhammer community knows, so they look smaller. One could say they are smaller by volume not by size (left aside comparing the orks. The WHFB-orks have the size of ogers or trolls in my opinion, so it's no wonder the LotR-orks are smaller.)

Personally I don't like the look of the ork and goblin models. But it could be I'm already too used to the funny comic-like appearance of the WHFB-orks. Bringing the original Tolkien-books back to my mind somewhere it is said that the orks were bred at Sauron's dungeons by corrupting elves and dwarves. From that point of view the models are quite good (you could still guess the elbish origins by looking at the goblins...).

The elbs and gondorian models are great! I especially like the woven elbish armour! Although they could have done a little more variations in the posture of the models. Let's see what they did for a job with the metal models coming soon...

And - very important - the 48 models in the basic box should be enough for playing the game at first. Later you will definitely need more goblins as they are very cheap in point cost (my hint is: buy goblins with spears! Explanation follows.)

What I really would recommend is buying the "fellowship of the ring"-box. Not only that the models are great and a must for a LotR-fanatic - you will need the fellowship-models for most of the special scenarios described in the rulebook.

The Game

I expected the rules to be easier as the game was intended to be for tabletop-beginners. There are many options for that: jumping, climbing, laying down, defending obstacles, getting on and off horses, and so on. But the center rules are quite simple and game is flowing quickly (at least with 30 figures).

But the thing an experienced Warhammer tabletop player will be surprised the most is the simplicity of head to head combat. Just roll a dice and the higher result wins! That's it. Of course if you have attacked with three models you are allowed to throw three dice so the probability is better. So mass is an important strategic part of the game. But never underestimate heroes. Their special abilities and the special points they have can be very powerful. My favorite is investing a hero point in an extra shot for all bows in 6".

One of the most interesting changes of the LotR-game are the phases and the initiative. Every round the dice decides who goes first. So the player with the better result gets the initiative. He moves his models first, then the other player moves, the player with the initiative shoots first, then the other player shoots and so on. In most situations it is better to be second because you can react on the opponent's movement. But if you are lucky you can have two movements and so get the enemy before he runs away too far i. e.

Strategic hints

I just played a few games but I think there are some things I already know about the game:

Take lots of models! Every model you have more in combat than the opponent is improving your chances to win. Take models with spears. They can support other fighting models by adding attacks even if they have no contact with the opponent.

Forget models with two handed weapons. They get -1 on their to hit roll. And that is a big disadvantage in my opinion even if you get +1 on the to wound roll.

If you have to take models with two handed weapons (maybe because you only have the basic box), always assist them with other models with normal weapons. Two handed weapons can never roll a 6 but your opponent might and if you roll a 1 you always lose. With assisting models you have at least a chance to roll a 6.

Resumee

My impression is experienced wargamers are not too eager to buy the LoR-game except fans of the book. Why should they? If they want to play a skirmish game, they take Mordheim, for battles they have WHFB. But I don't think GW made this game for them. The target group for the LoR-tabletop game are Lord of the Rings-fans who will definitely find their pleasure in replaying the decisive scenes and kids getting the game from their grandparents. So maybe it will be a kind of first blood game for coming tabletop-freaks. I think most people will keep this game in their closets to now and then replay a scenario with a friend, switching the good and bad side and having fun with that.

But the LoR tabletop game is definitely a game worth trying. It's a fast uncomplicated game and the skirmishing rules are providing many strategical options. If you have some friends who always comment your Warhammer games with a "Yeck", you could try to make use of the Lord of the Rings bonus to get them playing a tabletop. Some people already had success with that tactic. And maybe in some months ahead we won't need to circumstantially describe what a tabletop game is, maybe we just have to say "That's quite like the LotR-tabletop!"

I for my part will definitely keep on playing some of the scenarios. Already played Khazad-dum and Gandalf survived!

(Ghost rider)

Town Crier 16

Issue 16 of Fanatic's Mordheim magazine, Town Crier, is the first in a new format. It is now only half the size of the previous issues, 24 pages instead



of 48. In compensation they have reduced the cover price from £3.50 to £2.00. The reason I have been told is that Fanatic are taking on more work and new magazines (ie Exterminatus). As such they have limited capacity and have to reduce it's size. TC is now consistent with the other Fanatic magazines. I for one am disappointed. They admit that Mordheim has a great future and is still their best seller but we are losing out by 50% of the previous editorial content. Hopefully this will be restored in the future.

So what is in this issue?

FRONT COVER

On the front is a Kislevite warband in the city of the damned. Inside is a close up of painted Kislevite minis. This is a new warband available from Fanatic by mail order. The models have been designed by Mark Harrison and Seth Nash. Very nice they look too, with a preponderance of furry hats. They have a plug-in weapon sprue to make equipping the models easier. This is the future way Mordheim models will be produced.

KHEMRI-LAND OF THE DEAD

The first instalment of the new setting. I have to declare some self interest here as I am the Khemri setting project leader. Like Lustria before it is written by gamers and enthusiasts working via the internet. This instalment covers the introduction and the core rules for running a campaign in the land of the dead including the all important water rules. Unlike Mordheim trading is a lot more difficult. You may not be able to find somewhere to sell your treasure and buy equipment between every game. You may even have to choose between the treasure you carry and the water you need to survive. The article also gives some history of the Land of the Dead and tells you who may and may not be found fighting there. Most Mordheim warbands can be used but some, like Sisters of Sigmar are very unlikely.

KISLEVITE WARBAND

This is the latest warband from Mark Havener. Fanatic are producing the miniatures and have commissioned the rules to go with them. The warband looks pretty well balanced but I am not convinced about all of the special equipment. They can buy vodka at $35+2D^6$ gc which is a one-use item giving them +1 leadership. That sounds expensive to me but then if you don't like it you don't have to buy it. A number of silly errors have crept into the editing. Watch out for the warriors, they should cost 25 gc not 15 gc as printed. Take a close look at the example warband and you will see what I mean. I will definitely be buying myself some when I get chance.

THE WATCHTOWER:

The latest update of the rules list. Not great reading but a useful. reference

BACK CATALOGUE

Just what it says. This is a complete price list of all Mordheim models and suitable alternatives from the Warhammer range. It includes the latest Amazons and Kislevites. Unfortunately some the Kislevite prices differ from the feature advert on the previous page which makes it less useful. Best to check with mail order before placing any order.

BACK COVER

Inside are colour photos of a tomb raid in progress. On the back are the usual 'small ads' and 'personal' items. One of my favourite features.

All in all, the magazine is still good value and packed with interesting, however I do regret the reduction in size.

(tm)

Town Cryer 17

Town Cryer 17 is back from the printers and is about to hit the bookshelves.. For those who are keen to know what this latest outpouring from Fanatic contains - read on.



FRONT COVER

On the front is the banner 'Raiders of the Lost Tombs and a picture of a Mummy warband emerging into the desert. That is clue enough as to the contents inside.

Inside the cover is a teaser for the new Sisters of Sigmar models. Like the Kislevites in last issue they feature a plug-in weapon sprue to enable the buyer to customise them. They won't be available for a lillie while yet but they will certainly give Sisters' fans a boost.

KHEMRI - LAND OF THE DEAD PART 2

Not a film sequel but the next part of the alternate setting. Rules for fighting in the depths of the Tomb Kings er.. tombs. Scenarios and suggestions to convert existing scenarios to play underground. And last but not least rules for traps in Khemri. There are two alternative systems for simulating tombs and tunnels on the table top. Both require a little work but no more than creating a ruined city. Rather than cram the underground with lots of extra rules the writers (who include myself I should admit), have gone for a simple approach to keep the game flowing. The last item in the Khemri section is a little piece of prose - The Storyteller. A scene setter by non other than yours truly so I'll leave it to others to pass judgement.

GAMES DAY 2001:

A feature on Mordheim at GDUK. Fanatic put on a big display at Games Day as did the Ryn Tyrr Council. They are an internet group of Mordheim fans who are all involved in the alternate settings. They put on no less than three settings - Lustria, Khemri and the as-yet unpublished Karak Azgal. You can find out more on the last here on Strike to Stun. There are pictures of the various demo games including shots of Robert Walker's marvellous scenery for Khemri and Karak Azgal. Some rather nice vampires also get pictured but I think that is Steve Hambrook's enthusiasm rather than relevance to Mordheim. These ladies seem to have been pictured in every GW magazine and website that I have seen.

DEATH STALKS THE CITY

A novel way to use the Tarot card which comes with the Mordheim box set by Donato Ranzato and Christian Ellegaard. The card is passed around between players and represents a sort of daemonic possession until they can dispose of it. The rules extend from a single game and can be incorporated into a campaign. Many people have asked the purpose of the Tarot card supplied with the game. Now prepare to be possessed in the name of the Shadowlord.

LETTERS

A selection of readers' letters including ones raising the question of routing and whips. The whip question is one which is endlessly debated in the discussion groups. GW created a very difficult problem with a ranged close-combat weapon.

MORDHEIM CATALOGUE

A listing of the current models available for Mordheim. This time it is just a list not a detailed catalogue.

THE WATCHTOWER

The latest listing of the status of past articles.

BACK COVER

Inside is an interesting comparison of Khemrian scenery. Robert Walker's Games Day boards are juxtaposed with a GW Studio ruined temple. The standards are remarkably similar, both being excellent. The back cover has the usual amusing small ads.

Copies should be filtering into the shops soon so go and pester your local staff for a copy.

(TM)

Best of Town Cryer

Nearly two years old, Mordheim, City of the damned, Games Workshop skirmish game placed in the World of Warhammer is still one of the best games they ever published. Although Mordheim was already taken out from GW's actual product-palette, there is a live after death... Taken over by Fanatic Games, who take care about the "old" GW-games, the game gets a strong support by a regular published magazine called Town Cryer. There fans can find new rules, new warbands, new scenarios, modelling tips for terrain and miniatures, and many, many more. Although Fanatic is a branch of Games Workshop, most of the articles in Town Cryer are written by Fans. And this makes the magazine interesting and likeable because not all articles are written with economical interests in mind.



The greatest problem with the Town Cryers is that it is very hard to get them. Firstly, you have to order it directly at Fanatic Games or get a one-year-subscription (which is the best decision). IF, and that is the major problem, it is in stock. Because of the great number of fans or the low number of printed TC-exemplars, most of the time the Town Cryers are not available. This has changed a little bit during the last months, as Fanatic really tries hard, but it is still almost impossible to get an older issue of Town Cryer.

For this reason, the team around chief fanatic Jervis Johnson decided to publish a "Best of Town Cryer" in which the best articles of the older issues should be re-released. Unfortunately, all of the re-released articles are just from issues 1 - 6, which were firstly released as supplements in White Dwarf magazine. So all those, who hoped to get hold of the new Rules published in the out-of-print/out- of-stock Town Cryers 7 -10 and 12 would be really disappointed. Nevertheless, Best of Town Cryer is still a good deal if you don't have all of the old White Dwarfs.

But what will you really find within the 96 pages thick supplement for Mordheim?

After a short editorial by Mordheim-creator Tuomas Pirinen the book starts with the rules section. There you can find the Table for Random Happenings, which make the skirmish battles within the ruins Mordheim even more thrilling and eventful. Also, two new warbands, the Ork Mob and the Dwarf Treasure Hunters are introduced to the game. Rules and scenarios for multi-player battles and two new Hired Swords, the Imperial Assassin and the Tilean Marksman make the rules section perfect. The next part, the modelling section is the worst. As the whole magazine is printed in greyscale, much of the photos presented in the modelling Workshops are useless. If you have seen the original photos in colour, you will understand what I mean... Nevertheless, the articles are good and can give you much inspiration. The last part of the magazine consists of two battle reports: Skaven vs. Reiklanders and Possessed vs. Witchhunters. Although both reports are good, there is again this problem with the greyscale photos. Anyway, they give an good idea about the game and how to play it. Especially beginners can learn much about Mordheim and its playing techniques by reading it. But even Mordheim veterans will like the epic stile of both Reports.

All in all "Best of Town Cryer" is a good supplement for Mordheim, of great use for every fan of the skirmish battles within the ruins of the city of the damned. A drop of bitterness is that it merely consists of re-released White-Dwarf articles. But perhaps the guys at Fanatic Games are planning a second part in which the articles of the sold out Town Cryer issues will be rereleased. I can recommend "Best of Town Cryer" to every fan of Mordheim, as it provides good materia and inspiration, all within one booklet, but if you own all the white dwarfs with the Town Cryers in it, it is doubtful if buying is really necessary. Of course, unless you ain't a hardcore Mordheim-fanatic... (nc)

Daemonslayer

Gotrek the Trollslayer has yet to find his doom and his human companion Felix has yet to record it, and so both are back in the third instalment of the Slayer series, 'Daemonslayer'. The plot introduces us to a colleague of Gotrek's, the slightly dumb but surprisingly cheerful Snorri. The three of them are asked to join an almost impossible expedition to the Chaos Wastes to seek out the fallen dwarfhold of Karak Dum. Their transport is an experimental



airship constructed by yet another Slayer - this particular dwarf joined the cult after several of his inventions had failed, and he is now sworn to find death by testing even crazier machines, such as the zeppelin. However, the skaven arch villain we know from 'Skavenslayer', Grey Seer Thanquol, gathers an army to capture the airship. Thanks to dwarfen discipline, three Slayers at hand and an armada of gyrocopters the skaven army is beaten. Our heroes take off and head towards the Chaos Wastes, stopping in Middenheim and Kislev for supplies. Their chances to cross the Wastes and return alive as well as unchanged are slim. And Sigmar only knows what surprises await them in the once mighty citadel of Karak Dum.

'Daemonslayer' is the first novel of the series which does not contain previously published material. And it shows: this piece is completely rounded and lacks the piece-meal structure of the first two volumes. In other words, 'Daemonslayer' is the first of the series to really deserve the name 'novel'. Apart from that, very little has changed. The appeal of the story still very much depends upon action rather than suspense. And there is plenty of action. As a matter of fact, it seems to me that 'Daemonslayer' suffers from a tendency that is common to many sequels of Hollywood action blockbuster movies, such as 'The Mummy Returns'. The makers of such films often try to copy as well as top the original movie by producing more of same - with the emphasis on more. And thus 'Daemonslayer' portrays not one but three Slayers, it describes not one city but half the Old World, and it features many battles, fights and tons of monsters, including some we know from earlier volumes. Yet William King most displays his tendencies towards excess in his over-the-top use of technical gadgetry. His crazed Slayer Engineer seems to have invented everything from hand grenades to airships, apart from the fact that he seems to own a whole armada of gyrocopters. Even if most of this is actually explained and motivated in the narrative, the impression remains that the story is overly cluttered with such gimmickry. King tries a little too hard to wow us.

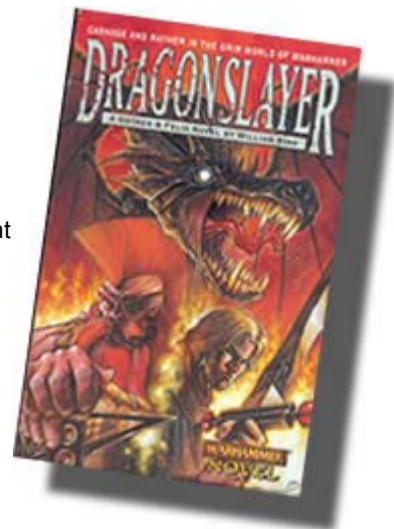
However, it is unfair to compare 'Daemonslayer' to a mere special effect extravaganza like 'The Mummy Returns', apart from the fact that books really should not be compared to movies. First of all, King keeps creating memorable new characters and developing the depths of the familiar ones. You simply have to love Snorri Nosebiter, who is mainly played for comic relief. The Slayer engineer Malakai Makaïsson is equally likeable, if only for his Scottish accent (watch out, non-native readers!). Most importantly, however, King gives us further insights concerning the psychology of Gotrek and Felix. We learn a little more about the Slayer's past, and the story seem to be slowly approaching the revelation of his greatest secret: why he became a Slayer. Felix, on the other hand, has to choose between loyalty and fear, and he seems to find the love of his life. As the readers follow his doubts and hesitations, his hopes and frights, they get to know him as a very deep, emotionally realistic and sympathetic character. Not your typical hero.

Apart from his sense of character, I also very much appreciate William King's great talent for descriptions of fighting action. His battles are dirty, bloody and fierce, as is fitting for the grim world of Warhammer. Yet the mind of the warriors is more important to King than all the gore. They are not mere killing machines, but people who are both scared of dying and exhilarated by the surge of adrenaline flooding their body during the fight. Since the readers often take the point-of-view of such a warrior, mostly Felix, King's battle scenes feel incredibly real. At least until the gyrocopters show up.

'Daemonslayer' is definitely a good read, albeit a dangerous one. If you are a GM of WFRP, I advise you not to give the novel to your players, except if you are running a very high-level campaign. They might be impressed by all the technical gadgetry and may want their characters to have similar toys, ruining the consistency of your game world. I speak from experience. Apart from its excessive bias towards Dwarfen technology, however, I take 'Daemonslayer' to be the best novel of the Slayer series. (mw)

Dragonslayer

Gotrek and Felix are back again in this fourth instalment of the apparently open-ended series. William King continues where 'Daemonslayer' ended and has the mighty Dwarven airship 'Spirit of Grungni' return to Kislev. There is no warm welcome at Straghov Mansion, however. The Kislevite stronghold, home to Felix's beloved Ulrika, has been ambushed by a Skaven army under Gotrek's arch-enemy Grey Seer Thanquol, who is intent on stealing the airship for the greater good of his rat-people. Yet as the Spirit's firepower is joined by the last surviving Kislevites, Thanquol's force is once again defeated. The adventuring party known from the previous volume, including Ulrika and the Imperial Wizard Max Schreiber, is thus reunited. They all board the airship in order to warn Kislev and the Empire



of the impending invasion, since they have seen huge forces of Chaos in the Wastes marching south. Their first stop is Karak Kadrin, the Slayer Keep. On the way, they meet a mutated dragon which almost destroys the 'Spirit' - only a terrible sacrifice can save our heroes. Thus, once arrived at Karak Kadrin, the slayers decide to go kill the dragon or find - surprise - their doom. Unfortunately, both a marauding Ork warband and a group of bandits would like a piece of the hoard, too. They won't, of course, if Gotrek's axe can avoid it.

Did I mention in my last review that William King has the tendency to try and top his previous novel? Well, let me recount that. We had one Slayer in the first two volumes, three in 'Daemonslayer', and a whole city full of them in 'Dragonslayer'. Admittedly, he thus broadens the spectrum of possible Slayer careers and biographies. For instance, he portrays a Dwarven thief who shaved his head after being caught but isn't quite reformed, and a young Slayer who hides his actual fear of death behind endless boasting. Other than these, King does not introduce a whole lot of new characters, but develops the well-known ones. The wizard Max Schreiber delves deeper into the mysteries magic and finds himself tempted to use his powers to snatch Ulrika from Felix. The relationship of the lovers is probably the most interesting part of 'Dragonslayer', simply because it's so unspectacular. Felix and Ulrika grow apart, as the bickering gets worse and their tolerance for each other's quirks decreases. It's a rather realistic portrayal of a love being lost. Most of the novel, however, is devoted giving the readers its title's worth. However I thought that the whole dragon-hunt business is a quest rather randomly inserted into the story-line, since it isn't connected to any of the two main developments of the series, i.e. the Skaven conspiracies of Grey Seer Thanquol and the new incursions of Chaos. Neither did William King put much effort into the dragon itself, which is a shame, because if one uses a creature as rare and mysterious in the Warhammer World as an actual dragon, one should at least try to make it special. But King doesn't give us much more than the fantasy stereotype, slightly Warhammer-flavoured by an utterly unneeded Chaos mutation.

As a novel, 'Dragonslayer' thus turns out to be a rather conventional piece from an author who lost touch with the inspiration that still emanated from his first few texts. Maybe it's just the law of serialism, but while number four in the Gotrek and Felix series is still quite entertaining, it isn't special. As gamers, we get a few bits and pieces of information about Karak Kadrin, the Slayer King and the World's Edge Mountains, but nothing that would make 'Dragonslayer' essential reading for the chroniclers of the Warhammer World. Hence the novel joins the ranks of those thousands of fantasy novels meddling in mediocrity.

(mw)

Gilead's Blood

Center of attention is the young Elven Noble Gilead Lothain from the Tower of Tor Amrok, last of his line. After the murder of his twin-brother Galeth by the henchmen of the foul ..., the young Elven Noble starts campaign of revenge against the assassins of his father. For ten years he tracks down all those who were involved in his brothers murder, only accompanied by his faithful retainer Fithvael until he finally stands before his archenemy only to realize that the vengeance didn't liberate his hearth from the bitterness of his grief. When he returns to his home Tor Amrok he finds his fathers court empty and abandoned, all of the courts members gone.

Realizing that the time of his race is gone, Gilead decides to travel out in the world to search for other living members of his race. Together with his companion Fithvael he ventures the Old World for signs of life from other elves. On their travels the both come to the Chaos Fortress of the Lord



Ire, who wants to conquer the world with his forces of darkness. Gilead frees the Elven Maid Niobe who was taken hostage in the ever-changing Chaos Fortress and falls in love with her. But the final victory over Lord Ire is only achieved by the self-sacrifice of Niobe and so Gilead again loses somebody he loves. Falling into a deep depression, the Elven warrior is taken hostage by Dark Elves (?) who make him believe that he is on Niobe's father's court by a powerful illusion. Only the unselfish rescue-action of Fithvael can save Gilead from his doom. The both flee from the deadly grasp of the foul Elves and resume their search.

On their further travels they have many adventures until they finally meet the Elf Nithrom, former member of the court of Tor Amrok. Nithrom asks the both to join his "army" to guard a small village in the border princess from the marauding hordes of Tilean Mercenaries. The army consists of a small group of warriors from all parts of the Old World: a Norse barbarian, a Bretonnian Knight, a Kislevite Warrior-woman, a retired Templar of the White Wolf and others. When they arrive in the village of Mantane they have to defend it against an Army of Mercenaries, Maura's Murderers, who are twenty times or more in the majority. Although it seems to be unbelievable, the small group of warriors manages to destroy the attackers, even if they have to pay a high price. The story ends with the final defeat of Maura, commander of the mercenaries. In the end, Gilead and his servant Fithvael again resume their search, leaving the village, never to be seen again.

All in all, Gilead's Blood leaves me with a strange feeling... a feeling that I already have read most of the book somewhere and at some time before. During the first 50 pages the novel reminds me strongly of Michael Moorcock's "Book Corum": a lone, bitter elven warrior against the rest of the world. Even the description of Gilead resembles that of Corum. Their fight against the Chaos Lord who lives in a Chaos Fortress which exists between the planes is so typically "Eternal Champion" that you sometimes think that you are in fact reading "The Book Corum" or "Elric". The last part of the book is just the Old World version of the Seven Samurai: Group of failed Warriors defends a village against bandits/mercenaries. In my opinion the book is not really good, what is a real pity because the background has many potential in it, but the authors were not able to make an advantage out of it (nc).

Forces of Fantasy

Forces of Fantasy is a hard to find GW product for the 1st edition of Warhammer Fantasy Battle. Released in 1985, this boxed set had three books and a little booklet. It was a companion to the original WFB, detailing a bit about the world and further expanding upon the game and its mechanics. Essentially the set is a magic expansion, rules expansion, and WFB Armies book in three little little soft cover books.

I'm not sure what it is, but I find something nostalgic about the cover art. While by no means "fine art", when I first got into roleplaying, it was the sort of image that would have fired my imagination. But enough about judging a game by the box cover!

Volume 1: Forces of Fantasy

This book serves as a sort of "Armies" book. For those looking for game atmosphere, there is little here. Some information on Men of the East (Arabs), Men of the Orient (including details on Samurai and Vim-to monks) and all of the other regulars, lots of Elves, Dwarfs, Undead, and a group that I never heard of before: Red Goblins. It concludes with Goodly Hosts



(including "Winged Panters") and Marauding Monsters ("Giant Weevils" and "Serpent Crawlers"). This book offers little additional detail that isn't described in WFB 2nd edition or 3rd edition.

Volume 2: Fighting Fantasy Battles

This book seems at first to be even less of value for those searching for world background. Rules for terrain, siege weapons, and mounted troops. After this section though, the book improves noticeably, providing designs and details on all the armies described in volume 1. Images of the "Oriental", "Eastern", and Slann armies give a glimpse into the cultures. Then there are the "Regiments of Renown" which introduces us to "Bugman's Brewers" as well as a few other groups that have long disappeared from the WFRP world (The Knights of Origo, Mad Mulla Aklan'ds' Death Commandos).

Volume 3: Arcane Magicks

This book, an addition to the WFB 1st edition magic system introduces us to "Oriental Magic": magic carpets, enchanted ropes, enchanted bottles, etc... Potions, magic artifacts and treasure charts are described, fairly dated material and not worth any close examination. Following this part are monsters, most notable are the "Genies" who have disappeared from the WFB/WFRP canon. Djinn, Efreet, and Dust Devils are all covered in the book, the rest of the creatures, Chaos Chimera, Hydras, and Balrogs deserve further little attention. Infestations, or swarms are detailed, followed by a few new spells. There is a magical items random generation section that might still be useable for WFRP/WFB, with the rest of the book further detailing magic items and weapons including the first appearance of "power weapons".

The Book of Battalions

This book is printed on poorer quality paper than the others, and is composed of fan contributions, none of it official. Most of the units are pretty uninspired. Some include a small bit of background and there is some information that other players might find interesting - to my knowledge known of the material in here has ever been used in an official capacity however. A few little tidbits can be drawn from it, but for all practical purposes, this book is unimportant.

Summary

This book is only of interest to the most devoted of warhammer collectors. Nearly all of the background material in here is presented in greater detail in other books. For those interested in WFB, the WFB 2nd and 3rd editions provide more detailed and complete information than the few undeveloped tidbits hinted at in this book.

Rev. Lepper