

Vampire Counts

Vampire Counts
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with Bill King
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This review assesses the value of a Warhammer Fantasy Battle product not as a war game accessory but as a resource for those looking for detail on the Warhammer world and its background. With that in mind, let's look closer...

This book came out after the Undead Armies book and attempts to separate the Vampire armies from the armies of the Lands of the Dead, in all probably a good idea in theory. This book will be compared to its forebear, the Warhammer Armies Undead book since it borrows from some of the material.

Introduction

An unnecessary page, especially when contrasted with the earlier book's material which was much more meaty.

World of Death and Horror/Necromancers and the Dark Art

This section serves to describe the malign powers of necromancy and its practitioners. While it may seem evocative, it is copied and pasted directly from the Warhammer Armies Undead book and thus redundant, and worse, abbreviated.

The Books of the Forbidden Arts

This section is a vast improvement over the earlier material, offering an overview of some of the more notable and evil texts in the world, although anyone who has read the game Call of Cthulhu or any Lovecraft material should be able to devise this sort of material on their own.

The Beast Within

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The book here finally starts to grapple with the subject, Vampires, giving them standard treatment on their thirst for blood and their immortal existence. There's little need to read it, you already know what its about.

The Shadow of the Vampire

This portion is standard fare as well, describing in brief the interaction between vampires and men and the weaknesses of vampires exploited by men.

Vampire Families

Here the book radically departs from the past, for it examines the nature of vampirism in the game and in a break from previous editions divides vampires into distinct families.

The first is most familiar, the Von Carstein family that embodies the traditional concept of the "aristocracy of the night". Strangely, Vampires herald from the land of the dead and the Lahmian nobility but their name is distinctly German and Old World – an issue not grappled with here. Being the most familiar the information here is redundant.

Lahmia introduces us to a sisterhood of vampires who are manipulative masters of human society, ruling from behind the scenes and form a vast conspiracy stretching throughout the Old World.

The Necrarch is a vampire warped and twisted by its nature and its study of evil powers, they remain aloof and concerned with their studies. As its name suggest, is more closer to the "Nosferatu" depicted in the film of the same title or the twisted half mad vampires from the grave of Eastern European folklore.

The Blood Dragon family is a misnomer – it is not the name of a family but a knightly order subverted by vampires. Like the Necrarch's they are devoted to study, but in this case it is the martial arts that draws their attention.

While all four families are described in form and feature, they are lacking in historical detail or any further insight. Each is given a single page, with a quote at the top and a quarter page illustration present. Lacking is the attention to detail so memorable from Warhammer Armies Undead.

Furthermore many might see this as an effort to adopt "Vampire the Masquerade" like divisions with the vampires. It does seem remarkably derivative and lacking a history we have no rationale for the powers or changes later ascribed to each.

Domains of the Dead

It is impossible to avoid comparisons from the earlier book because so much of this book is derivative. The first location described, Moussillon, elaborates upon and in

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some cases simply alters some of the original text from the first entry. More confusing is the inclusion of Moussillon, since there seems to be no relevant connection with the Vampire Counts.

The Cursed Lands of Sylvania is most egregious, being a shallow description of a location so critical to the subject matter yet dealing it less attention than Moussillon which has no relevance at all regarding the Vampire Counts. Dreadful.

Blood Keep proves as uninteresting and maybe less informative than Moussillon. Most of the material here is historical information that has already been recounted and it merely ends in a myth and rumor that is uninspiring.

Silver Pinnacle takes a brief and superficial view on the Lahmian vampire hold. It is notable for its attention to detail on a superficial level without revealing anything of greater import.

Vampire Counts of Sylvania

Finally the book provides a bit of detail on Sylvania, an area mentioned earlier and glossed over. What is insulting is that all the material on the next five pages is copied and pasted from the original work. So surprised was I that I referred to the acknowledgements in the front to see if the original author was credited.

This portion of the book is redundant and displeasing, especially to learn that one paid twice for the same material, and that new material to cover the new additions to the world and the game are absent.

Bloodlines

While the Von Carstein is described for the second time in detail the other vampire clans are neglected. What we do receive next is simply a list of powers reflecting the necromantic and supernatural abilities that the various clans have. All clans are described and have 8 to 9 powers. Some are interesting and provide a feel for the clan, but overall its simply a list of special abilities.

Liber Necronium

Once again this is almost entirely a reprint of the material from the Undead Armies book released years earlier.

Collecting a Vampire Counts Army

The next 16 pages are minis, including yet again a “how to paint skeletons” guide! Of little interest to non-mini painters and lacking in any background related detail.

Liber Mortis: The Book of the Dead

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This is essentially the bestiary for the book, and like the earlier text it borrows heavily from an earlier version and you can see where they changed a few elements in a sentence to make the new material seem fresh. All the descriptions in the earlier Undead book are longer and more evocative.

The only element I like is the inclusion of the Black Coach, a hearse endowed with necromantic energy. A nice evocative touch if a bit impractical for a Vampire to travel about in, after all I suspect it would attract considerable attention, even if quietly parked in the vampire's own coach house. New creatures include Banshees and Winged Nightmares.

The next section is an army section but I'll bypass this one entirely.

Aristocracy of the Night

This section depicts some tired, tired, tired old necromancers, names that should sound so familiar I'll call them by their first names and most will know who they are: "Dieter", "Heinrich", "Krell", "Mannfred", "Vlad", and "Isabella". A welcome change is Melkhior, the "ancient" or father of all his clan which gives a bit of detail about him. The next character is Neferata, who is less well written, who while at the World's Edge mountain seems to make a business out of seducing Bretonnian Knights, who would seem to me to be over a thousand miles away! The last one is Walach the leader of the Blood Dragon order. There is a little background about him but almost nothing on the order.

Designers Notes

These conclude the book, and they are of no interest at all.

The Art

The cover is atrocious and much of the art in the interior is dark, murky, and some of it unappealing. I consider the earlier book the more appealing of the two.

Conclusion

This book is a waste. Its partly reprint, the background of the vampire bloodlines was printed in WD in part rather than in the text, and essentially the only new material is 8 pages, one page of description for each blood line and one page depicting each of the bloodline's powers. GW has produced some dreadful material, but this book clearly ranks up there as the most unnecessary and egregious of them. There is no worse book produced by GW, and I am including the Bretonnia book in that statement! This book is a dark and deceptive moment in GW's history.

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--Rev. Lepper

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