SPECIAL GODSFIRE ISSUE

GODSFIRE: a prehistory

Producing GODSFIRE

GODSFIRE session narrative

plus...

Stellar Conquest Expanded

An OGRE variant

“G. E. V.”

and eight game reviews
WHERE WE'RE GOING

Some words of explanation are in order for this issue. GODSFIRE, our largest game to date, is a huge success. For this reason we have included three GODSFIRE articles and beefed up this issue to a total of 48 pages. There are three months listed on the table of contents but the whole number keeps everyone's subscription straight. No one loses and we catch up the one month we wanted. The next issue will be out in the usual two months. The next issue will be a MicroGame issue featuring an introductory article on MELEE with some variant articles and other goodies.

The book column will be back next issue, it was bumped for space this issue. Briefly, look for THE DOOMSMEN OF CORAMOND by Brian Daley if you like fantasy adventure. Get THE MALACIA TAPESTRY by Brian Aldiss if you like fantasy as literature. If you must read THE SWORDS OF SHANNARA by Terry Brooks wait for the $1.25 paperback. The excellent Hildebrandt's brothers art is sure to be available in a calendar soon.

WORK IN PROGRESS: MELEE will be ready for shipping a week or two after you get this issue. WARPWAR is MicroGame #4 as a two player ship combat game. You build ship and bases and fight them in a diceless CRT. Movement is on a hex grid or star with some stars connected by warplines for instantaneous movement. Also in the micro mill but not yet sequenced are EREMION, OGRE II, CHITIN II, a multi-player time combat game, an unmanned robot war game, and a martian ground combat game.

Large games working are LABYRINTH and HYMENOPTERA. LABYRINTH is our fantasy role playing biggie. HYMENOPTERA, well I'm still not satisfied with it. A strategic game at the tactical level was a conceptual mistake. A strategic game with 1,000+ counters is wrong when each player needs only 20-30 units on the map at a time. The final version will be a pure strategic game. Other games in the series will carry the specific unit and tactical detail. The goal now is a $10 game that six can play in four to six hours. It's been a long wait but it'll be right when you get it.

The format of Where We're Going will likely change next issue. It will be devoted more to a question and answer format, like the last of this column.

PATRON SUBSCRIBERS should note that their payments are going into a special fund. It will go for a game project we wouldn't otherwise be able to do rather than for phone bills and paper clips. Those who've asked for a payment plan to ease the pain of a $100 chunk will be pleased to note that we will now accept $25 a month for four months. Your Patron subscription will start after you have accumulated the whole $100 payment.

THANKS to all those readers who sent us the names of stores who sell games in their area. It works and we have several new outlets. Stores listen to their customers and will carry what they ask for. The micros are the best bet. Our only retailer complaint is keeping them in stock.

TOO MUCH material on our own games is a frequent complaint. We print the best of what we get. Most of it is on our stuff. If you want other games covered then send us something on your favorite game. We prefer more variety but we won't put poorly written material in just for balance.

BACK ISSUES are going fast. All of 1, 2, 3, and 4 are gone. Ten in is very short supply and nine won't be available for long either. Issues 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 11 are in good supply.

SOLITAIRE games are a constant demand. We're working on some ideas in this area but won't have anything to show for months. OGRE and MELEE are fair bets for solitaire play if you're willing to devise your own scenarios.

CLUB DISCOUNTS have been asked for but won't be available soon. We already have our TSG discounts. The problem is that we can't give any larger discount on games of other publishers and don't want to have a special additional discount on just our products. We are trying to work something out.

FREE TSG sample are no longer being sent out. You'll have to pay cash money now, even with information requests.

WHY DON'T you do a game on a (book, comic, movie, etc.) is often asked. Getting rights for a game is copyrighted material is an effort. Then there's the extra work of designing to an existing format. We'd rather do games on our own themes. It's more fun, easier, and gives better games.
man-to-man combat with archaic weapons...

MicroGame 3 is —

MELEE

Game design by Steve Jackson / Illustrated by Liz Dunforth

Components include:
- 8 1/2" x 11" arena map
- Over 50 fighter counters
- Illustrated rule booklet

$2.95 - $2.50 to The Space Gamer subscribers.

METAGAMING CONCEPTS
Box 15346
Austin, Texas 78761

Ask for the MicroGames wherever you buy games or hobby supplies.

This game had three parents. First, the interesting times of the last fifteen years provoked me to read much history and sociology. Secondly, Metagaming Concepts promised to be an informal and sympathetic publisher which paid money. Finally, being a lifelong reader of science fiction, my opinions were well-formed, and I saw no SF game (not even Stellar Conquest or StarForce, to name my favorites) which did quite what I wanted.

I began thinking about the game in February, 1976. By April, I thought it was complete, and in May Howard Thompson said he thought so, too. The contract was signed in August; play-testing started in September. Since I live in San Francisco, collaboration was not attempted. The mechanics of the original were improved in many ways, and the elegantly detailed Combat rules should have a "Built in "label. The result is clean (I've found but two rough spots in my copy) and smooth-playing. The game is, I think, a remarkably clear simulation of complex events. The responsibility for this gracefulness belongs to the other people in the credits: Steve Jackson in particular, Howard Thompson, Elton Fowell, Robert Taylor, Susan Tunnell, and the obviously crackjack Tabletop Generals.

I had designed a previous game, done as a gift for a friend. Putatively a space game, it more resembled an eastfront armor game, but the experience made me respect writing rules. I therefore had an idea of what I was getting into when I began what was originally titled Wars of the Narym.

The development went fairly smoothly, mostly because of a comprehensive shopping list. I wanted the following: 1) limited or negligible stacking of counters; 2) low unit differentiation; 3) a simple 3-D movement system; 4) simultaneity of the effect of simultaneity; 5) an easily learned basic game; 6) a dramatic and reasonable game universe which definitely related to play; 7) a socio-political module which inter-related Realities, Party, Popular Approval, and International Input; 8) a module which would not displace anything learned in the basic game; and 9) characterized governmental systems which could be
tried out under differing conditions. Alas, I couldn't get 9) to work, though I may someday be able to refine it.

Implicit in this was a feeling of wanting an ethical game. I wanted the players to feel no special relationship to their hypothetical populace, to at least feel a little fearful at what that populace might do. A game where the place of people is not a future I find entertaining. These imaginary beings do not exist to bollix Master Plans, that is, to have any effect on the actual game play. They are the medium through which players duel with uncertainty. It behooves them to act kindly, even with dreams.

Having said, someone is now wondering why I destroyed a star system 300 parsecs so far from the sun. One can say that the game is rationate. Such a question leads me to the consideration of the first item on my shopping list.

I detest putting more than one counter on a hex. I know that there is need for raising little layered monoliths like chits, and that stacking is logical and design-efficient, and that, tactically, stacking hides weakness and strength in a shell of organic, four-digit or divisional instead of peas. No matter, I hate stacking. I cannot remember what it is that I hate it for. Godfire lessens such trauma.

PDF/AG operations benefit from the large system area sheets; SQD augmentation acts as a carrot and a consolatory prize for stacking freaks.

In considering stacking, a cautionary tale occurred to me of what would happen if someone dared overstack: the Cluster-Buster bomb! Continuing with this problem, I had an idea that a concentration would occur, and where, in a very empty universe, such forces would be a dangerous entity. Obviously, as in Stellar Conquest, in the heart of an open cluster, where hypothetically, tightly packed and producible raw materials, such as lemons, may be found, the result could flow freely. This seemed a logical and consistent arena for conflict, and it provided the outline of the game's rationale. The

Godfire disaster also explained, beyond simple decency, why the rules do not permit planetary decimation. Since the GM would have to two-fer and complex tiles, I created the unit differentiation rule. No player should be forced to juggle parcellar, world, and forty-one peculiarly valued combat units. Further, since the game would be divided into two sections, I tried to make sure that Metagaming would enjoy producing a game with 6000 counters. As published, the unit properties are limited, the only limit being the producing party's policies, and that's the way it should be.

Continuing the shopping list, I discovered no simple 3-D movement system exists. Determined not to use notation, which is a pain and sheer chaos if you own more than a dozen units, I finally settled for the present system, which is nothing more than a slight change in the air, that the units are turned inside out, so that the chits are printed on the map. Howard's idea of an air marker system, and I guess that's clear enough. As I write, Godfire is the only game I know of which uses such a simplistic and straightforward system, and I guess that's true.

The obvious drawbacks are that arranging all those levels like a spiral staircase takes room, and that drawing them makes you blind. Two markers are provided to provide adequate maneuver room, thus raising the price of the game. The full map provides 2112 cells for movement, almost exactly the number of spaces contained in an SPI mapsheet 5/8" hexsheet. In terms of production, graphic markerism is a step back, cutting efficiency in half.

In terms of decision time during play, the Godfire system is much more efficient than notation, by a factor of two or three, and increasing drastically when the number of these markers is multiplied. Since there are two counters for a height chit display, and one has to be changed with each altitude, this system is costly, even if you immediately find the last "1" in the counter mix.

The more serious drawback may be that the map is tactically tight - a unit cannot be farther than four cells from one of the sides. This is not a "vast three-dimensional sea," as the words from Starforce go, but neither is it a "small, flat lake." My first conception was of a view-from-a-tank, and I (at first) drew it that way. Then I thought that it might have been a good idea to keep it that way. That is all.

(All names on the strategic map were taken from the Times atlas; some were altered to fit the layout and draw rule since discarded. I regret shortening them; si-ylabism gets dull. However, an Extant Siberian province.)

Movement allowances were kept to keep units from bouncing off the grid. Another descriptive system was intended to discourage attempts to build lines and to provide a way to destroy them. The idea was extended in testing to allow the ability to call on a unit's plan of AI to supply the player's army with a divisional or a fleet.

The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it. The basic game was kept simple in order to improve upon it.
Godsfire underlines basic political relationships and capabilities in a game. It is not snobbishly detailed, but it can force you to evaluate common activities, both while playing it and when you emerge, blink-eyed, in a place very far from the Narmy and the purple glare of Godsfire.

On that time you have Godsfire rule questions, I would be glad to answer them by mail. My address is 12 Perine Pl., San Francisco CA 94115. I can't help with "best move" problems, since I don't know the answers. You'll have to decide that yourself, and then write an article about it for TSG.

It was late September, more or less of 1976. I was sitting around the Metagaming office, trying to recover from two months of working on Monsters: Monsters: Monsters; I still twitched every time I saw a "simple piece." And why was Howard grinning like that?

"Okay, Steve, wake up," he said, or something equally cheerful and asinine. "I've got a reward for you. If you do such a good job on MM, you get to work on a new one."

"From a filing cabinet, he pulled a bulging cardboard envelope labeled WARS OF THE NARMY, and extracted a thick sheaf of yellow paper.

I leafed through it. Forty pages, give or take. I twitched. Howard was still emptying the envelope. Several bags of counters (about a million). A bunch of sheets covered with geometrical designs. Three combat results tables. Two enormous maps covered with purple-and-yellow hexes and black squares. I screamed and dived under the table.

Three days later, I woke up at home. The envelope was sitting on the table. Shaking my head, I began reading the rules.

Six hours later, I was muttering to myself and moving counters around.

Next day, I got Howard on the phone. "Steve, I've never tried."

"Hey...you know this Narmy thing? It's got possibilities."

That was how it started at this end. Actually, the biggest change we made was the name - from WARS OF THE NARMY to GODSFIRE (after the jujitsu hyperrun that appears to fry you when you exceed stacking limits.) The rest was just debugging - making an already good game better.

Two things became obvious. First, we were dealing with the best combined political/military simulation game we'd ever seen. Second, it was so long and involved that the average players would have trouble finishing a game due to sheer lack of time. After all, running a real war is a full-time job for a whole nation. Lynn's game simulated that a bit too well. So our efforts went toward simplifying the accounting while retaining the basic complexity. This wasn't supposed to be a simple game - but it needed to be finishable.

After some playtesting, it began to work a little better. Lynn's original two movement phases per turn were cut to one, and the initiative system (a truly great idea) was simplified somewhat. One of the original three cuts was eliminated, and the combat ability of the three unit types were changed somewhat to make them more nearly equivalent in value.

The most annoying problem with the whole game was the distance factor. Lynn was in California; we were in Austin. When we didn't understand something, we couldn't just call him and ask. On the other hand, we couldn't just throw it out and rewrite without understanding; the game was too intricately woven for that. So, every so often, something would come up to force us to beat our heads against the wall, hoping for enlightenment. Sometimes it came.

This eventually made for a better game, just because the "hard parts" were so much mulled over...and it made me very conscious of the need to make sure rules were unambiguous and to provide examples. But, at the time, it was sometimes irritating. That is the reason we swore off games from "outside" designers (although if and when something as good as Godsfire comes...)

PRODUCING GODSFIRE
OR, THERE WAS THIS BIG ENVELOPE, SEE...
by Steve Jackson
in. I only wish the game cover had come out looking a little more like the original; Elrohir used some fluorescent tones that the camera didn't pick up.

The other version of the cover - the one we didn't use on the game - is on the cover of this magazine.

The cover is the most impressive thing about the booklet; the interior graphics were drawn from the counters. I had quite a bit of fun on those counters. I wanted designs that would be readable, and different enough that no one counter would be mistaken for another - but pretty. After all, if you're going to command an interstellar empire's ships and men, your counters ought to look like ships and men.

I ended up with a ship design for the SQQ, and a jet for the AG, appearing 1, 2, and 3 times on the 1-, 2-, and 3-unit counters. For the PDDs, I had my choice between guns, rockets, big guns, or "ray units" - so I used all four on the different-denomination units.

Probably most work went into the two big sheets that cut apart into system, NG, and data sheets. Playtesting quickly showed us that the system and NG sheets had to be small. The ones in your game look much like Lynn's originals; they've just been redesigned and shrunken, so you can put a hundred dozen in front of you at once.

Actually, I think that next time we do a game this big, we'll go back to tally marks on a small sheet, rather than having the players move indicators. Not as neat-looking, but easier to fit on a table.

One other touch was the individualized system and NG sheets. Originally, all the system sheets were to look alike - but then it turned out that we could afford to do two different big sheets - which meant that each individual master could include planet and national-government designs. So I went crazy on them. Each system sheet now includes the name of the planet, and a map.

Ah, yes. The maps. Lynn's original sheet design included a central circle for ground movement, but it was blank. It seemed natural to make it into a map - so one night, working alone over the light table, I started work. And that was a TRIP. HAVE YOU ever created sixteen worlds?

The national government sheets don't have names (there are too many different scenarios), but each does have its own symbol, and each symbol matches the NG counter for one set of units. A nice touch, I modestly admit.

Then there are the Data Sheets. These were eliminated because in this game even more than most, you need reference copies of the CRTs, sequences, etc. In spite of everything, Godsfire is a long, complicated game; we did everything we could to let it move faster.

On the whole, I'd say we succeeded: I'm happy with Godsfire, and I think Lynn Willis has reason to be inordinately proud. The early scenarios are fine for two-to-three-player, two-to-three-hour games, but the real fun comes when you round up a whole group of worthy opponents and spend the whole day playing.

(Elsewhere in this TSG, Robert Taylor describes one such marathon.) I hope gamers have half as much fun playing Godsfire as we had in getting it to press. If you do, I'll be quite satisfied.
On a drizzly Saturday night in February Howard Thompson, Steve Jackson, and myself met at Ben Oster's place for a night of SIMPLE GODSFIRE. Ben had a table large enough to accommodate the entire map, so this time we were not stranded in the hall. Initial set-up took about a half-hour. Those playing for the first time would require more time.

We played scenario ten with each of us having two systems at the start of the game. Steve's systems were Assab and Zia, Moros and Dasar formed Howard's systems, Ben chose Weribe and Huacho, and my systems were Vandi and Grabom.

2. General strategy at the beginning of the game was based on the positions each player held around the map board, and on their abilities as gamers. With almost the length of the map separating Howard and myself, I felt comfortable knowing he would have to go through Ben or Steve to get to me. Howard's "builder type" in STELLAR CONQUEST, is a formidable opponent. He starts slow, usually waiting until he has a strong base before moving against an opponent, but once he gets rolling he is almost impossible to stop. Ben was closer to me, but Ben is rather new to gaming, and while his strategies are sound his tactics are usually weak. Ben made an inviting target, but to Steve against him would expose me to my biggest threat - Steve. Like Howard, Steve is a tough opponent. He plays a very detailed game, and he always surprises me with his unorthodox style. I knew I would have to watch him closely and counter every move he made.

My strategy was to play a defensive game, and wait for an opportunity to gain control. I hoped that "opportunity" would take the form of a mistake by Steve, but things didn't turn out that way. In fact, my strategy fell apart around turn two, but into the fray after a short pause for the uninitiated.

3. GODSFIRE is similar to STELLAR CONQUEST, but one of the major differences (among many) is the social interphase. Unlike SC, where if you want attack ships or planetary defenses, in GODSFIRE the type of military units you purchase is determined by the political party in power, and whether the region is industrialized.

Industrializing a region is a difficult task, placing the correct party in power and maintaining it is also hard to achieve. But without a balanced mixture of political parties, and therefore, a balance of military units, your actions and strategies will be limited.

Of course, this juggling act can be made more difficult by your opponents slipping money into your system and attempting to subvert your political parties, and there is always the danger of revolt (nasty things) which will usually require military muscle to quell.

And so it goes.

As you see, GODSFIRE requires your strategic concepts to be framed within your political structures. Generally, victory will belong to the player that has the best political setup combined with a good overall strategy with the usual adherence to tactics and timing.

Howard, the old master, proved this point quite well during the game.

TURN 1 My initial political situation is good. I'm top heavy with moderate political parties, but I should be able to industrialize quickly. Howard surprises me and Steve. He has sent 3 SQDs toward Zia, while Steve has shifted most of his forces to Prr. I position the bulk of my ships around Grabom. Ben has sent up a simple screen of ships around both his systems. T-2 Howard's 3 SQDs continue toward Zia. Steve doesn't consider them much of a threat since he moves more of his forces to Prr. I move almost all my ships into a tight defensive position around Grabom. I think Steve is trying to draw me out. Ben is shifting money from Weribe to Huacho. His forces are still screening his systems.

T-3 Howard and Steve fight a small battle between Assab and Zia. Howard overplayed his hand, and Steve destroyed several of only 2 AGs. I resist the temptation to attack Steve, and wait to see if he will pursue Howard. Ben is still sending money to Huacho, and he has moved his ships into a wider screen around his systems.

T-4 Steve has purused Howard, instead he resumes his stationing of forces around Prr. Howard has backed off, but begins getting his forces together for a possible counterattack on Steve. Ben's ships maintain their positions, and I follow his example.

T-5 Howard's 2 SQDs have landed on Huacho and have begun production. Steve's 3 SQDs have swung up on all the systems. Steve sends more of his forces to Prr. Is he seriously going to attack Prr, and attempt a pacific victory? Ben has quieted his system, and is maneuvering some ships toward Vandi. Now I must balance my forces between Steve and Ben. Howard appears to be taking an interest in Soont.

T-6 My political situation is very good. I was able to change the party in one of my industrialized regions from moderate to extremist. Now I can now begin to vector his forces toward Soont. It appears he is duplicating Steve's action around Prr. Ben has made some minor movement toward me. I'll force him to attack early with a small thrust toward Huacho.

T-7 Steve was starting to feel threatened by Howard's forces around Soont. I believe Steve is about to abandon his attack on Prr, and concentrate on Huacho. Howard was exposed to the possibility of attack, so I forced him to maneuver toward me. I forced Ben's two of his SQDs and lose one of my own. Ben has the best political make-up, and he's much better at using it. My political situation is static, which is good, but I need a reactionary political party so that I can build PDFs. I also need to build PDFs, and either, and Steve can't build SQDs.

T-8 Howard has positioned his forces to the west of Soont. I can launch an attack either Assab or Soont. Steve sends three AGs toward the middle of the board. Perhaps he hopes to take advantage of Howard's exposed systems. Ben and I tangle again. I lose one AG, and destroy two more of his SQDs. I would like to back off from Ben, and Steve might join forces against Howard. Another option would be to attack Steve at Prr, and see if Howard would also attack Assab. Howard is holding his ground around Assab, and I'm happy to see him go. I need the time to work on my political situation. I'm feeling it's about to hit the fan.

T-9 Howard and Steve continue to dance around Soont, but Steve is concentrating forces at Prr. Ben disengages at Tufan, and I'm happy to see him go. I need the time to work on my political situation. I'm feeling it's about to hit the fan.

T-10 Surprise. Howard attacks Steve at Zia. A beautiful stroke by the "old man." Steve's National Government flees with the treasury to Assab. Ben and Howard form an alliance, and I am attacked of Steve, and dispatch my main fleet to Zia. I leave a thin screen of AGs around Vand and Grabom.

T-11 Howard is wreaking havoc on Zia. He will probably reduce Zia to subsistence level if Steve doesn't re-capture it soon. Steve's 3 AGs have penetrated to Moros, and were able to destroy one of Howard's AGs. My fleet and Steve's Prr force arrive at Assab. Steve loses 3 AGs near Assab, and only destroy one of Howard's SQDs. Together, Steve and I wipe out 3 SQDs and 2 AGs of Howard's in and around Assab. Howard is still holding his ground around Vand. His timing is excellent and his forces outnumber mine by 3 to 1, but he leaves many of his ships exposed to nullified attacks. Ouch. I was able to outmaneuver Ben, and I hit his exposed units with good efficiency. The dice failed me. Ben lost no ships, and destroyed 2 AGs of mine.

T-12 Howard retreats from Zia. He still has the initiative. The battle has moved to Assab. Smash. Howard is tricky. He suckerd in Steve's two of his SQDs and pull out six of Steve's SQDs, but Steve destroyed three of Howard's AGs. Also, Steve's systems two of his SQDs and lose one of my own. Ben has the best political make-up, and he's much better at using it. My political situation is static, which is good, but I need a reactionary political party so that I can build PDFs. I also need to build PDFs, and either, and Steve can't build SQDs.

T-13 Steve begins to return his NC to Zia, and begins to restore the economic level of the regions. Howard is holding his ground around Assab, and he and Steve are locked in a close fight. Their losses are equal: 1 SQD and 1 AG each. Steve's 3 AGs near Assab, and Steve might join forces against Howard. Another option would be to attack Steve at Prr, and see if Howard would also attack Assab. Howard is holding his ground around Assab, and I'm happy to see him go. I need the time to work on my political situation. I'm feeling it's about to hit the fan.
Howard’s. Ben tightens his grip around Vand. My main fleet is coming to the rescue, and I should be able to drive Ben off, but my losses are high. I destroy one AG of his, while he wastes 2 SQFs and 1 AG of mine. Sigh.

At this point with our supply of munchies and cola depleted, the clock edging past 2 AM (I told you guys, we got to start at 8 AM not 8 PM), and our eyeballs red and swollen, we stopped. Exhaustion was the victor.

Actually the consensus was that Howard enjoyed the best position when we called a halt to the game. Steve would have to rebuild Zia before he could launch an attack toward Howard’s territory. Ben and I were stalemated with Ben holding a definite advantage. So Howard could pull back and attack a neutral system with a high degree of success, and therefore achieve the necessary conditions for a pacifist victory. Of course, he could have always pressed the attack against Steve, and also had a high degree of success since he was outproducing Steve by 2 to 1 in military units.

And although Howard never produced any PDVs, he never lacked for them. He bought them from Ben. Howard reads the rules, and under the head- ing Diplomacy he found out what he needed. We decided it was within the rules to buy them from another player as long as the amount spent off-system was balanced by the amount spent on-system. If not, the allegiance index of all the regions on all the buying player’s systems would drop for each GB difference.

In hindsight, I should have attacked Steve from the beginning, while Steve would have been better off attacking Soont, and guarding against Howard. Ben played good strategy, but he should have moved against Howard when Howard hit Zia. As for Howard, he’s hard to find fault with a winner, but once Steve committed the major part of his ships to Pirr, Howard would have had an easy time with Ben.

At any rate, the game was well played and enjoyable, and in gaming that’s what really counts.

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**FEATURES**

**CHITIN: I**

**THE HARVEST WARS**

by Howard Thompson

Kkha-nu-Zlek’s Spyder mount chittered beneath him restlessly from the pre-dawn chill. Kkha thrummed peaceful thoughts to the Spyder and other nearby shapes in harmony with his brood meld brethren. Full concentration was necessary to keep the force moving. Brutish warriors loved the warmth of hive far more than the cold of an early fall morn. The sun would have been well up before the hulking Gantuas and testy Phlanx thrusters would have moved on their own. Strident urgency harried the Zlek meld’s harmony. HIVE food stores were low from the large population.

The Zlek meld had been trained as a command team even before writhing from their cocoons. Kkha had been attuned to Zlek as a replacement this season. Zlek team was four seasons old and one of the more successful combat command melds available to the hive mothers. Kkha was part of a novel attempt to replace meld losses instead of waiting meld survivors when their numbers sank too low for effective melding. Kkha was less Hymenoptera and more an individual than usual, being added to an existing meld of Basic. His usual training would have been as part of a new meld from the time he was larvae.

The mind linked Zlek meld urged their warrior ranks forward at maximum speed. They had been moving eight days, ever farther from the closeness of the hive mothers. In the small valley ahead, the huge Vlaros plants with their sprawling root structures would be ready for fruiting today or tomorrow. The Vlaros would be ready for harvest but only fighting would win it. Mentations of enemy command melds whispered even now in the Zlek mental net. Other Termagants and Low Render warriors waited ahead in the irresistible cold. Other workers sensed the ripened Vlaros pods and longed to drag them back to the basking mesh of the hive mothers.

Kkha wanted Vlaros and bodies to please, warning from the mothers, too. Winter would be stark without a maximum harvest success given this year’s bad weather. Kkha wanted food, wanted to kill hated enemy warriors, and wanted the love and growth of the mother’s hive. Kkha wanted nothing for himself. Himself was an alien concept despite his unusual melding. Self meant nothing to Kkha, even when he acted independently. The hive was all and the Zlek team was his only life pride. Yet, even the pride of meld wasn’t his but alls.

---

To say that Men and insects differ seems as obvious as stating that night follows day. To gain a real feel of what that difference would mean as an experience is difficult. Men are individuals who are never sure that their perception and experience of existence is at all similar to that of any other men. We will never know what a society of sentient insects will be like to its non-individual members. They probably don’t have anything like a personal, individual sense of themselves. We can speculate for fun and knowledge and learn by observation.

Hymenoptera, like Stellar Conquest, is based in a game that was developed years ago for personal amusement. Since it was done for fun
and at an age when heavy thinking wasn't important not much thought was given to the hows and whys of those insect societies. They had space ships, individual personalities, and "human type" feel and motivation. That vitally important aspect of the Hymenopterans was created, and is now revealed, with the notion that bugs could do anything humans can do, but differently. Chitin I is a tactical abstract from the to-be-published game Hymenoptera and reflects the physiology and psychology of Hymenopterans.

Hymenopterans have fairly infrared vision but poor sight in the human optical range. They see fairly well close in sunlight and passably well in the dark. They see detail poorly and at a distance not at all. The Hymenopteran sense of smell far surpasses men's. A third level Tek only need smell a complex substance and taste it to have a good idea of the chemical structure. Their hearing extends a bit below the human low and higher than that of dogs. This combination of acute hearing and smell lets Hymenopterans sense and accurately identify objects at greater distance than humans, even though the object may be out of sight and at farther distance than humans readily perceive.

The excellent smell and hearing coupled with poor vision gives Hymenopterans a different perception of objects than man. Their experience of objects is more sensual, more organic than man's. So man objects are solid, more visually separate from our person. Hymenopterans see their world less but experience it with far more detail of sensation. This sensing difference is accentuated by relatively poorer physical co-ordination and dexterity. Clumsy handling of artifacts gives them a view of objects as something to be sensed and experienced rather than something to be used and manipulated.

So far Hymenopterans sound sort of semi-human. Psychologically the difference is one of clear individual identities. A personal ego is not possible for a race that truly recognizes itself as separate from the hive membership. They don't learn or object relationships as much as humans do, so they don't have the users and manipulators. We are object-oriented to our world. We manipulate and control our environment through the perception of objects. Hymenopterans think of objects less as something to be used and more as something to be experienced and identified. They use tools sparingly and with poor efficiency. They don't have missile weapons in war. Poor vision, co-ordination and object sense never gave rise to the concept of throwing an object. Thrown objects meant to intersect the course of another moving object will be a distinct surprise for the first Hymenopterans to encounter humans. They will, of course, develop missile weapons from these encounters but from an entirely different approach and viewpoint.

Hymenopterans will have a few surprises for man, too. With their telekinesis, they can move objects without touching them. They use this ability to control all of organic life on the hive planet itself.

Man will learn that long term Hymenopteran captives are no longer human. They will also learn that our pregnant women become horrid. They also become the instrument for the first successful breeding of humans with aliens. Though we'll never even meet one.

***

Scent of ripe Vlaros wafted up the mists as Eloina's first warning rays pierced to the valley floor. A thrilling eagerness went through the mind net of Khha's meld. The match had been made in time! Vlaros would be theirs, if they fought well for the hive mothers. Raspings trills began from the workers as they too scented Vlaros and began to press more rapidly forward.

Hold! Hold!, went mentally speeding out to the workers from the command meld. Wait! Wait, til warriors crush the thorax chitin of hated enemy soldiers. Wait! Wait, til the way is clear to the Vlaros mound-stalks.

Workers waste service with useless deaths. Living to present Vlaros to our worshipped hive mothers is ultimate. Wait! Wait, dumb, eager little brothers.

With the sun up and Vlaros ready the battle develops swiftly. Zlek meld sends swift Ternagant skirmishers to center and right to hold and cover the Vlaros stalks. The center of the valley has some low hills and heavy undergrowth where several small streams join. Low Renders moving to the center in support. Flyer Plunges will soon awaken from their warm nights nesting, to come diving to the fray. If Basics know any fear it is of flyers swooping down to kill them as battle-field controllers.

Musk odors of the enemy are now maddeningly evident. Mind chitterings of the enemy command meld whisper, if strangely, in Khha's mind. Forward! Forward, urge the Basics to their killing charges. Despite lingering chill the warriors now need little spur to move. The violent warriors now need control to avoid frothing, berserk, killing lusters that shatter any cunning battle.
On the right, where Kkha approaches, Termagants clash with the Zlek force retreats from the Vlaros stalk to regroup. Hold! Kkha's melts link cries! Battle swirls on the left and is soon to join in the center. Kkha feels Zlek Termagants readying a new counter thrust in front of him. Not yet! Wait! Don't...now.

Even the poor eyes of Kkha's group can now see the huge, central stalks of Vlaros. Enemy Termagants are sensed waiting, but no enemy workers are yet in the Vlaros. Hold again! Meld brothers, Kkха calls, to our left come Gantua smashers.

Kkha's sensings are true. Coming from the center to the left of his group are a full three mandibles of enemy Gantuas in thudding, humping charge at the regrouped Zlek Termagants. Zlek Planxes with Kkha require concentrated holding as the small Zlek Termagants are pounded to jelly and scattered by the enemy Gantuas.

Soon the huge Gantuas stand exhausted from their fearsome rush. The Zlek Planxes are only now released in a furious counter-charge of their own. Slowed only by the stream to their front Kkha's Planxes surge forward in a wall of deadly, weighty spikes. The Gantuas barely have time to face the charge ahead. The wall of Phlanx points stabs deep into the confused, tired Gantuas. Huge bodies are speared, thoraxes ripped, legs severed. The Phlanx charge home to break the enemy Gantua smashers.

Already counting the victory of the charge Zlek workers move in toward the Vlaros. The surviving Zlek Termagant mandible moves in with them as a screen. A detached group of Phlanxes moves in support of the Termagants and straining workers. Surviving enemy Termagants hold briefly then pull back to make line with the enemy Gantuas remnant.

Above! Above! shrieks a warning in Kkha's brain.

But, it is too late. Enemy Plunge are already swooping down in attack on Kkha and others of his command in a mold. Zlek Basics fall and rise. They were left exposed by the Phlanx charge and pay for the lapse with their lives. Control command of the Zlek force on the left is briefly endangered until the humming wings of Zlek Plunge enter the struggle. The airborne attack is short and gory but enemies are repulsed.

The victory-high Kkha felt from the Phlanx charge fades. The Plunge's surprise assault on the Zlek command has provided the others with regrouping time. Some hive workers have been killed trying to approach the Vlaros. Enemy hive workers have also appeared. The hope for a quick grab of the Vlaros has now dissolved into a desperate, bloody brawl.

Chelan, the fourth planet of the F6V primary Eloina and the hive planet of the hymenopterans. Eloina has a solar luminosity of 2.0, a solar mass of 1.2, surface temperature of 67°C and a B-V color index rating of -1.44, yellow toward whiteness in color. The other stars of the system are a K4V, Ruhnd, and Myrsia, an M2V spectroscopic class star.

Ruhnd has a .35 solar luminosity value and is inclined elliptical orbit around Eloina. Myrsia has a solar luminosity of .01 and is in a near circular orbit around Eloina for 134 years. Ruhnd's closest approach to Eloina is six light hours and the rarest contact between Myrsia and Ruhnd at 13 light hours due to the 34 degree difference in the inclination of their orbits around Eloina. The Hymenopterans are banded with a multiple star system which has the primaries far enough apart to prevent major dislocations to planets in the sytem. Ruhnd is large enough to allow exploration at a technological level that would fail reaching steps as distant as even a few light years.

Chelan, with a diameter of 15,000 km, has a lower average density than Earth's. This gives it a surface gravity of .82 Earth normal. Sea level atmospheric pressure is about 94% greater than Earth's at 221b per square inch. Chelan has held more of its original atmosphere since the mass of its three moons is much smaller than the largest Chelan moon having a diameter of only 1,700 km. The thicker atmosphere and lower gravity of Chelan combine to make it fairly easy for heavier flying creature and plants to evolve. The height range for metamorphosis hymeopteran flies and larger plants is in the 15-20 km range.

Tectonic activity on Chelan is rapid and the low planeta density and small lunar gravity pull would have given a level of tectonic activity much lower than Earth's. However, Ulipa, the next planet out in the Eloina system, has a diameter of 65,000 km with a mass forty-one times that of Earth. Ulipa orbits at an average 915 million kilometers with an 11% difference in its closest and farthest approach to Eloina. With a planet of the size and half Saturn's mass that close to Chelan, (and occasional passes even closer) it is surprising that Chelan doesn't experience earth-thrashing earthquakes more violent than the 9-11 Richter scale disasters that occur yearly. This recurring earthquake activity is the cause of many active volcanoes is, as would be expected, disruptive to Hymenopteran cultural and social development. Mountainous, rough terrain would be even more common if it weren't for the rapid weathering rate of the thin, Chelan atmosphere and violent storms. The 22.33 hour Chelan rotors-

tional period coupled with a Chelan equatorial circumference 1.5 greater than Earth's yields a more rapid wind storm movement despite the greater relatively density. What would require 100 million years of tectonic weathering and activity on Earth is finished in 10 million years on Chelan.

Oceans account for only 52% of Chelan's surface area. This leaves the Hymenopterans almost 3 times more raw land area on their home planet than man. A higher percentage of Chelan is mountainous and much of the flatter area isn't arable for the major food staple strains of Vlaros. This then is the home of the Hymenopterans. In general, warmer, more physically violent, and more supportive of evolving, life forms. Up to the time the games Chelan and evolution among the Hymenopterans was nearly stagnant. There wasn't much evolution culturally or physically beyond the existence of Basics with some differentiation into worker and warrior types. All they had gone through was a improving ability to manipulate very tiny masses telekinetically. The dawn of the Hymenopteran bio-genetic revolution was from some unknown genius' first fumbling attempts to alter DNA and RNA structures in fertilized eggs. The results were a mixed bag but it proved more than enough to insure Hymenopterans a place on the galactic scale a millennium later.

The day of struggle had worn on long past noon. Overhead flights of gliding, stinging Plunge had recrossed the battlefield many times. By now all darkness. Half the harried Zlek command was dead. Workers of both forces continued to stream on to the battlefront. The dead who'd failed the hive mothers. Most of the Vlaros and corpuses were still in control. With the sun almost set. It was less than half its initial force of warriors much as left to be won or lost.

Kkha's soldier bred mind suffered the melding nulls of his dead brothers in silent urgency. Zlek miel was almost blank today whatever many active volcanoes does, as would be expected, disruptive to Hymenopteran cultural and social development. Mountainous, rough terrain would be even more common if it weren't for the rapid weathering rate of the thin, Chelan atmosphere and violent storms. The 22.33 hour Chelan rotors-
Basics. Workers and Flyer s have the ability to operate independently as required, though with less intelligence than if directed by Basics. Warriors without command control won’t move fast, act defensively, and are far less effective.

Advanced victory conditions of Chitin I reflect the food value of the hive members themselves. It is possible for a hive to win the bulk of a harvest yet lose so much protein through battle dead they suffer a net loss of food energy. Workers grab bodies as well as Vlaros when battle rages. Both are food for the hive. If Hymenopterans have religion or soul belief it would include fervent longing to end in their hive’s own food processing vats to be ingested by their brothers and be again with the hive. It is perhaps the only religion for insects who are smart yet treat themselves as one with the whole community.

***

Hymenopterans seek and hoard food above all else. Food is the ever present constraint on hive expansion. With sufficient food, a hive could expand population at a 50% annual rate. The hive mothers want food for their young, so, the Basics get it for them. This is the whole rationale of Hymenopteran existence.

As a game, Chitin I portrays the harvest war phase as it was in the early stages of the Hymenopteran bio-genetic revolution. The prime directive was still to harvest the Vlaros, this despite the startling advances in mutared workers and warriors of all kinds. Even as Basic cognates began to mutate smarter and more capable versions of themselves, obtaining as much Vlaros as possible with all speed was still the rule. The seasonal wars were rampant for nearly a hundred years after the development of the first genetically improved warrior. The wars only ended when the mothers of a single hive had established their sisters over the entire planet and all others were exterminated.

The Basic cognates are the sentience of the battlefield and have management. Possessed of telepathy and control, they direct the primitive minded warriors who might fail to killing themselves if left unmanaged. Workers and flyers are a bit more intelligent than warrior types and don’t act as commandos, until even though they do take direction from the precious Vlaros a few Plunges dropped in to kill the last of the Zlek Basics with the group. A frantic weaving and bobbing of armored limbs and abdomens instuned, desparate and wild. When the dust of the small tumult cleared one Basic, four Plunges and Kkha’s Spyder mount lay groaning and broken. Kkha’s middle left appendage had been ripped from its socket. Slapping mud on the seeping ooze he mounted a Gantu.

The fleeing workers had gained a little time but not enough. The exhausted Zlek force charged among them with abandon, risking the death only workers can give when the harvest urge is on them. The Vlaros had to be stopped here or it would be too far for the Zlek workers to reach.

Soon, there was but a pile of fresh bodies and Vlaros stalks surrounded by the surviving Zlek warriors. A party of enemy Termagant with a few Phlanez drew up to ready an attack. Kkha ordered for a force with a detachment to the south as cover for the approach of some Zlek workers. The attack of the enemy drove home before the workers could arrive to move the food closer to the home hive. Kkha waited until the last minute then sent one of the surviving Zlek Plunge groups down on enemy Basic Cognates as the battle joined. After some frantic killing and a Zlek Gantu counter charge, the battle was over. A few enemy dragged away, no commanders to control them.

Kkha surveyed the battlefield, now hung with haze, from the back of the restless Gantu and saw that duty remanded him to guard the Vlaros he had. Workers were soon among them lifting up huge loads to carry to the mothers. Checking the Zlek meld net, Kkha knew Zlek was done from this short day’s war. Kkha whipped the minds near him to even more speed. The deaths gone would be wasted if the Vlaros and bodies weren’t removed quickly from this spot.

***

The long, exhausting day was finally drawing to a close. Basic, Workers, and Warriors had carried the last Vlaros stalk from the valley. The last Zlek Plunge hauled the last body up the valley’s slopes and skirmished with the enemy for the few last casualties. The fragmented Zlek remnants barely had time to make an evening camp outside the valley before sundown’s cool creep into their bodies through their wounds.

Zlek had won a fair sized victory in terms of food value hauled from the battlefield. This year’s harvest was poor, as predicted. But, most of the hive would be allowed to live through the winter to a new spring. In the frequent deaths had been, that was as much as any could expect.

It mattered little that only thirty percent of the Zlek led force would return to the hive mothers. It mattered little that the Zlek command had been smashed. Hably smashed beyond rebuilding. What mattered was that the hive had food for the winter and would suffer no major catastrophe.

When the dawn of the next morning broke, Kkha didn’t ride but was carried as food, dead, by a worker. His mind was still alive, but his body was shattered and rent. His glory had been in some last rear guard actions covering the movement of workers to the rear. It was combat of death, but they knew it would buy a bit of precious time for the workers, and a counter stroke. Kkha and the others gave that time and their lives in joy for the hive mothers later.

Despite a still living brain, the Zlek meld survivors ignored Kkha. Those useless are already dead to those who can still give active service to the hive. Kkha knew himself dead and did no more than listen to the mental melding of his brothers on the homeworld. He lived through the days and nights of bumbling march in the worker’s clasp. He lived to sense the near forms of the hive mothers welcoming those survivors who worshipped them and the food of their victory.

He lived, for a moment, as his husk was dumped into the vats of the hive. As the vat’s food acids lapped over him to melt his flesh, scales and skeleton into food stores his last thoughts were of serving. ALL GLORY TO THE HIVE! ALL WORSHIP THE MOTHERS! May my flesh nourish the others, that I may live again through you to serve the hive. May your life serve the mothers as has mine. May you end with the love for final service as I.
STELLAR CONQUEST EXPANDED

by Robert C. Kirk

Many S-F gamers have probably entered the field with the purchase of either STELLAR CONQUEST or STARFORCE and gone on from there to purchase more as this has invited those who own or otherwise have access to both games and who appreciate the extra three dimensions of star space in STARFORCE and the socio/economic competition which is the raison d'etre of STELLAR CONQUEST.

Basically, to give STELLAR CONQUEST this extra dimension of playability, we need to make certain adjustments to the STARFORCE map to enable us to play STELLAR CONQUEST on it. The STARFORCE map represents a roughly spherical volume of space containing 36,907 hexes in which 74 star systems are depicted. The SC map has 54 star systems contained in its 172 hexes. Obviously, on the STARFORCE map we have a far greater potential for expansion and exploitation. Another advantage is that the semi-hidden movement—opponents will not know how far above or below the board other players' ships are.

A second advantage is that the stars are improperly marked for use in SC. The simplest way to correct this requires colored paper, double-stick Scotch tape, and a hole punch. Place a small strip of tape along the edge of a piece of appropriately colored paper and punch out a star. Since the tape is sticky on both sides, you can then stick your star to the map. This will not interfere with the play of STARFORCE on the map and in any case, they will peel off easily.

Since there are only 74 stars on the map of SC compared with 78 Star Cards, the cards can be used as they are. As there are five types of stars in SC and only four on Star Cards, make 10 BLUE stars, 11 GREEN stars, 20 YELLOW stars, 12 ORANGE stars, and 21 RED stars. This will, in a game in which all 74 stars are explored, use all the "G" cards and leave one each of the "B", "F", "K", and "W" cards. (The map is big enough to add even more stars in the empty hexes if this is your taste.)

Use your judgement as to where to place which type of star. They can be adjusted after a couple of games if you feel it's necessary. Due to the relatively vast stellar distances, the initial setup is different from SC. Since it could take several years of gameplay time to get your star far enough to be inhabited, each player begins the game with his 35 million population already established on a Terran-type planet having a maximum habitability level of 100 millions of population (i.e. TR-100). In addition, each player receives 25 Bonus Industrial Units to spend as desired. Each player starts the game with 4 Scout ships and 2 Escorts, all located in the home system's star hex and having a movement allowance of 3MA and a maximum ship range of 11 hexes for the Escorts.

Which systems are best used as home systems? In large part that depends on how you scattered your stars. If you place players you have (more than six are not recommended), and how soon you want to be able to reach the other players. For an interesting two player game, 70 OPHIUCHI (at 2036/+1) and SIGMA DRACONIS (at 2326/-17) are recommended. These are the two most obvious stars on the board (being the home systems of the two alien races on STARFORCE). They are a good distance apart (21 hexes). The Draconis player's main problem is getting down to where the action is, Sigma Draconis at +17 being one of the highest stars on the board. There are nine other star systems within an 11 hex range. The best player, at +1, has the choice of colonizing upwards towards Draconis or downwards where he will be difficult to reach. Also, there are three separate DNS, each hex destroying one.

The STARBEAM (STB) is the ultimate weapon, converting a starship into a device to focus the entire energy output of its sun into a solid beam of energy, which destroys all other ships in that system, both friendly and enemy.

When functioning as a STB, the SGA cannot shift any ships in that turn. Forces attacking an STB equipped system have one chance to destroy it, by attacking and destroying the STB. If the defending player, upon learning the enemy fleet composition, must decide whether or not he is going to use the STB; if so, he has no choice but to use the SGA's normal offensive capability.

As the starbeam is the ultimate offensive weapon, so is the BOMB (NVE) the ultimate offensive weapon. It is planted in a system's star by enemy forces which have destroyed all defending ships and the SGA. The defending player rolls two dice for each nova bomb, with the following results:

- 2 or 12 — device is a dud
- 3 or 11 — instant nova
- 4, 6, 8, 10 — star explodes with in 20 years
- 5, 7, 9 — star explodes with in 10 years

To determine the year in which your star explodes use chits numbered 0 to 9 (for 10 years) or 0 to 9 (for 20 years) and draw one each game turn until the 0 is drawn, which indicates just when the nova is. You can remove your population in DN's and ATK's at the rate of 3 of each in 10 years. If the colony lasts until a production year, everyone can be removed in C's. Any extra IU's and RI's are lost.

INDUSTRIAL UNIT COST SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IU cost/Item</th>
<th>80 SG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55 NVB</td>
<td>20 PFS/yearly 40 STB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note that a PPA now costs 40 IU's instead of the additional 20 IU's each production year to maintain. If a year is skipped, it is still only 20 IU's to re-enter the PPS.*

*Although not included here, the production of inter-planetary ships as described in TSB #7 can be adapted nicely to this format.*

Concerning ship movement: The counters need to be numbered so you can keep track of the star just moving moves for just the six ships.
you start with can get quite involved. Either use the counters provided with StarForce or number the fronts of your SC counters and ignore the ship designation printed on them. (If you number the SC counters on the back, you will effectively ruin them for normal use. Every time your opponent sees #13 coming at him, he will know an ATKh is on its way.) To keep track of which ship is which, where it is, and where it is headed, ordinary notebook paper can be used as per table #2.

`Meaning: Counter #2 represents an escort headed for 3018/+9. After the first turn it was at +7, after the second +8. It is only necessary to record the Zulu coordinates (the ship's location above or below the board) each turn as the ship's two dimensional location is marked on the board by the counter.

Do not use counters for CT's. When establishing a new colony, record it on your record sheet as you normally would in the turn on which your CT's would otherwise arrive. This serves the purpose of keeping your colonies hidden until your opponent notices you building ships there. You cannot use that colony for purposes of extending ship range until the turn after your CT's would be expected to arrive.

Don't limit yourself to the instructions contained herein. These innovations of the basic Stellar Conquest game are designed to add scope and realism to an already detailed game. It does make the game longer, but much more interesting."

```
# ship destination 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4
2 esc 3018/+9 +7 +8 +9 +9
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**CONTINENTAL SIEGE AIRCRAFT**

*a variant introducing aircraft to OGRE*

by Greg Costikyan

Graphics By Sigoonda

10.0 INTRODUCTION

Continental Siege Aircraft is a variant of OGRE adding bombers, fighters, anti-aircraft units and the airborne equivalent of Ogres to the game.

11.0 AIRCRAFT

This section, and the four sections that follow, deal with the various units added by this variant, and their capabilities and limitations. This rules section (11.0), deals with the rules common to all aircraft. The following three sections deal with the individual aircraft types, and the last deals with anti-aircraft units.

11.02 When the players choose to play one of the standard scenarios using air rules: bombers, fighters and AA units are all considered to be armor for point purposes. The strengths of bombers and fighters are given below.

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fighter</th>
<th>Bomber</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D4, M6</td>
<td>D3, M5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/3</td>
<td>6/0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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11.03 At the beginning of a game, all aircraft enter from an edge of the map. Which map edge an aircraft enters on is determined by the initial positions of the owning player's units. Thus, in a straight-forward defense vs. Ogre scenario, any aircraft owned by the defender would enter on the defender's map edge, and so on.

11.04 Aircraft move in a manner different from normal units. Firstly, aircraft are considered to face towards a single hex junction. (See illustration below). A hex junction is defined as the point at which two sides of a hex intersect. The "nose" of an aircraft's counter must always be set pointing towards a single hex junction.

11.041 When an aircraft moves a hex, it must move into one of the two hexes from its junction. The aircraft must determine which of the two hexes it will move into every time it takes a single hex. For instance, an aircraft starting in hex 1616 pointing towards the hex junction formed by hexes 1515 and 1515, could move to either of those hexes (1516 or...
11.05 Aircraft may ignore terrain. They may freely move through crater hexes and rubble hexes.

11.06 Aircraft may freely move through hexes containing other units and stack with other units. Note that this is an exception to rule 5.02, which states that no unit may end its movement in the same hex as another unit. Aircraft may end their movement stacked with other aircraft, and/or with ground units.

11.07 All aircraft must move as many hexes as they are able. Thus, an aircraft with (for instance) five movement points may move five hexes. Unlike ground units, aircraft are forced to move their full movement allowance every turn.

11.071 Fighters are given a movement allowance of 6; however, a fighter may move either 5 or 6 hexes, at its owning player's option. This is an exception to 11.07.

11.08 The only ground-based units that can attack aircraft (aside from AA units) are Howitzers and Ogres.

11.081 An Ogre may attack aircraft with its missiles and with its primary batteries. Secondary batteries and antipersonnel weapons, however, are ineffective against aircraft.

11.082 Howitzers have their attack strength halved when attacking aircraft.

11.09 If an aircraft is attacked and a "D" result is on the Combat Results Table, the aircraft is forced to take evasive action. This means that the aircraft's counter is flipped back to a "D" on the aircraft's owning player's turn.

11.091 If an aircraft is attacked by an Ogre's missile or a Flying Fortress's air-to-air missile, it must automatically take evasive action, even if the missile attack results in a "NE" on the CRT.

11.10 It may occur that, because of a player's actions, an aircraft is forced to fly off the edge of the map at some point in the game. The players may, if they wish to keep the aircraft in the game, keep track of the aircraft's "imaginary position" off the edge of the map, keeping track of the number of hexes it is from the map edge. The aircraft is then scored as if it were at the map as quickly as possible.

12.0 BOMBERS

12.01 Bombers are aircraft designed to deliver a load of explosives or tactical nukes to a specific target. They do not carry weaponry other than their bombs.

12.02 Each bomber is considered to carry three bombloads, and may therefore make only three attacks in a single game. After a bomber has made its three attacks, it becomes useless, and is removed from the board.

12.03 Bombers release their bombloads while moving, not during the combat phase. A bomber may release a bombload in any hex that it moves through in the course of its movement. Any unit in the hex in which a bombload is dropped immediately undergoes an attack by the bombload, which is considered to have an attack strength of "6".

12.04 An aircraft may release as many of its bombloads in a single hex as its owning player desires. It may release bombloads in any pattern at any time during its movement.

12.05 After a bomber releases a bombload, it may continue moving. Attacks by bombers are resolved in the movement phase, so an aircraft that has released all its movement points may continue to move after releasing a bombload.

12.06 Bombs are considered to have no effect on aircraft; they may only affect ground units.

12.07 Bombloads have their attack strength halved (to "3") when infantry units are bombed, because infantry tends to be more dispersed than armor.

12.08 Although when all other units are bombed, a bombload's attack strength is treated as a single unit, as is the fire of normal units (see 6.09), a bombload may split up its attack strength when attacking an Ogre.

12.081 A bombload's attack strength may be split into as many as six parts. The way in which a bombload's strength is split need not be into equal divisions—thus, a bombload's strength could be split into one attack of "4", and one of "2". Each of the parts of a divided bombload's attack strength may attack a different part of an Ogre. Example: A bombload's attack strength is split into one attack with a strength of "2", and four at "1". The "2" is used to obtain a 1-1 attack on four successive antipersonnel batteries.

12.082 Although a bombload's attack strength may be divided, a single weapon system of an Ogre may only undergo one attack from a bombload. The "2" bombload's strength could not be divided so that, for instance, one weapon system underwent three 1-1 attacks. If any single weapon system of an Ogre is attacked, the attack strength points devoted to attacking that weapon system are totalled in a single attack.

13.0 FIGHTERS

13.01 Fighters are aircraft designed to intercept bombers, and to protect bombers from intercepting fighters. As well, they are capable of strafing ground units.

13.02 Unlike bombers, fighters make attacks in the normal manner. They do not carry bombloads, but simply attack enemy units. However, a fighter may only attack enemy units in its forward arc (see illustration). A fighter's forward arc is all those hexes that a fighter could move into if it were moving—the fighter's forward arc is bounded by the two hex rows that can be traced from the two hexes in front of a fighter.

13.021 A fighter's forward arc does not include the hex it is in; thus, a fighter may attack aircraft in its hex.

13.03 Fighters may attack either aircraft or ground units. However, a fighter's attack strength is halved when it attacks a ground unit.

14.0 FLYING FORTRESSES

14.01 Flying Fortresses, also known as Continental Seige Aircraft or Ogre Magi, are the airborne equivalent of Ogres. There are two types of Flying Fortresses: CSA-10, and CSA-15.

14.02 Flying Fortresses have Movement Points in the same way that Ogres do. Each hex a Flying Fortress moves through forces it to expend one movement point. A Flying Fortress begins with a Movement allowance of 4, and, in keeping with 11.07, must move four hexes each turn. When a Flying Fortress has expended a certain number of movement points, its movement allowance falls
to three, at which point it must move three hexes a turn. Note that a Flying Fortress' movement allowance falls one point for every 1/4th of its movement points it expends. Eventually, a Flying Fortress' movement allowance will fall to zero, at which point it is considered to come crashing to the ground, and is destroyed.

14.03 Flying Fortresses have two types of bombs; one type (listed on the Record sheet as Bomblasts) are treated in exactly the same manner as bombers' bomblasts. The other are antipersonnel bombs.

14.031 Antipersonnel bomblasts are dropped in the same manner as regular bomblasts. However, antipersonnel bomblasts have no effect on armor units; that is to say, they effect only infantry and CP's.

14.04 Flying Fortresses are equipped with air-to-air missiles. These may only be used on enemy aircraft, they have no effect on ground units.

14.05 Flying Fortresses are equipped with two types of guns—main and secondary. These fire in the same way fighters' guns do—i.e., they may only be fired in the forward arc of the Flying Fortress.

14.06 Flying Fortresses attack and are attacked in the same way as Ogres. That is, attacks on Flying Fortresses must be directed against specific weapons, and the Flying Fortress is not destroyed until it has lost all its movement points.

15.00 ANTI-AIRCRAFT UNITS

15.01 Anti-Aircraft units are ground-based units designed to destroy aircraft. Although they can be used against ground units as well as aircraft, they are less effective when attacking ground units.

15.02 There are two types of AA units—Light AA and Heavy AA. Their strengths are indicated below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Light AA</th>
<th>Heavy AA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D2, M1</td>
<td>D2, M0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/5</td>
<td>8/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15.03 AA units have their attack strength halved when attacking ground units. They use their full attack strength only when attacking aircraft.

15.04 Note that a Light AA unit has a movement allowance of 1, while a Heavy AA unit is immobile.

**EXAMPLE OF FLYING FORTRESS RECORD SHEET:**

**CSA-15**

4 Bomblasts (6/0; D3)  o o o o
3 Air-to-Air Missiles (6/5; D3)  o o o
2 Main Guns (4/3; D4)  o o
6 Secondary Guns (3/2; D3)  o o o o o o
18 Antipersonnel Bomblasts (1/0; D1)
   Used only against infantry & CP's  o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o o
60 Movement Points

00000 00000 00000 (movement drops to M3)
00000 00000 00000 (movement drops to M2)
00000 00000 00000 (movement drops to M1)
00000 00000 00000 (movement drops to M0; CSA-15 destroyed)

**CSA-10**

2 Bomblasts (6/0; D3)  o o
1 Air-to-Air Missiles (6/5; D3)  o
1 Main Gun (4/3; D4)  o
4 Secondary Guns (3/2; D3)  o o o o
12 Antipersonnel Bomblasts (1/1; D1)
   Used only against infantry & CP's  o o o o o o o o o o o o o o
48 Movement Points

00000 00000 00000 (movement drops to M3)
00000 00000 00000 (movement drops to M2)
00000 00000 00000 (movement drops to M1)
00000 00000 00000 (movement drops to M0; CSA-10 destroyed)
PHIL-CON 77 will be on June 24-26 at Widener College, Chester, PA. Listed events include: tournaments, demonstrations, seminars, movies, awards, and prizes. Games listed are D&D, BOOTH HILL, KINGMAKER, SAMURAI, and others. For more information write: Jay Hadley, 918 Harry Street, Conshohocken, PA 19428.

CINCICON VII is to be held July 15-17, 1977, at the Junior Achievement Hall of Free Enterprise in Cincinnati, Ohio. Events include a wide range of games, abstracts, cyber sports and participatory literature. Examples: Kingmaker, Scrabble, ches, D & D, TV pong, and SUPERHERO 44. SUPERHERO 44 is a new game of superpowered crime powers beyond human abilities like Superman. Toolmasters (Characters with technological specialties like weapons or crazy inventions like Iron Man), or Ubermensch (the "ultra specialist"), like Tarzan.

For more information write: CINCICON VII, c/o Boardwalk, 1032 Delta Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45208.

HOUSTON WARGAMING CON’77 will be held at Rice Hotel on August 12-14, 1977. Events include a dealers area, 12 tournaments and cash prizes. For more information, send SASE to: Southern Convention’77, 2601 Esther, Pasadena, TX 77502.

Available from Theta Enterprises, 114 N. McKinney, Dept. AM, Richardson, TX 75080: A Handbook for Building Three Dimensional Starmaps. Includes computer coordinate translations of the entire Gislese Near Star Catalogue of 2,000 stars to 3D mode (X, Y, Z, and top view polar view in unit parsec scale; 3D coordinate list for stars within 6 parsecs at 3/°pc and unit parsec scale; 6 parsec exterior front view polar view in unit parsec scale; complete instructions and diagrams for building 3D map of the 80+ nearest stars within 6 parsecs; 3D list of the approx. 500 nearby stars with absolute magnitude of 6 or less; the working computer program; general advice in starmap design. $6.00 US pdd.

A spokesman for TSR says STAR EMPIRES will be available about June 15th. Metagaming will ship copies by first class mail as soon as we receive our stock.

If you are interested in learning more about the L-5 Space Colonies to supply energy to Earth, contact L-5 Society; 1620 N. Park Avenue; Tucson, AZ 85719. Christine Hunt (Westville Apts. B3-Al2; Farneworth Drive; Slingerslands, NY 12519) suggests writing directly to your Congressman and to President Carter to make them aware of the advantages of the space colonies. She offers to answer questions (send SASE).

Acquisitions Department

The Avalon Hill Game Co. recently announced the acquisition of the entire game line of Aladdin Industries. The six games acquired include Tripples, Deluxe Tripples, Barrier, Perplexus, Bali and Totally.

The latest acquisition of Aladdin games follows AH’s purchase of the Sports Illustrated, 3-M, and Diplomacy game lines. Avalon Hill is pursuing a definite policy of growth through expansion. The wargames segment of the AH line has long been the most profitable and AH has contributed a disproportionate share of profits to the parent holding company. It will be a real challenge for AH to put life into lines that others were willing to sell off. Hopefully we won’t see wargamers carrying the load of supporting the new AH acquisitions. It would seem unfair for the wargames to be the profit producing part of AH but not get all the expansion effort. HT.

THE SPACE GAMER has been nominated for the Charles Roberts Award for Best Semi-Professional Magazine, winner to be announced at Origins 77 held in New York City July 22, 23, and 24.

GenCon West ’77, sponsored by Outpost Hobbies Inc., will be held at Villa Motel; San Mateo, CA; September 3, 4, and 5. If interested write P.O. Box 4042; Foster City, CA 94404 or call Thomas and Mary Jean Vaughan at (415) 573-6747 by June 30th.

Tacticon II will be held July 16 and 17 at Dunfee’s Royal Coach Inn; 7000 Southwest Freeway; Houston, TX 77036. There will be tournaments, seminars, and films. For more information, write 915 Silver Rd. #329; Houston, TX 77024 or call (713) 688-0531.

MichiCon VI Gamefest will be held June 3, 4 and 5 at Oakland University, Detroit. Planned by the Metro Detroit Gamers, it will feature Avalon Hill’s Tom Shaw, Randy Reed, and Richard Hamblen; over 25 board-game tournaments, seminars, and more. For further information, call Al Slesinger (313) 839-3364 or write him at 19941 Joan; Detroit, MI 48205.
It was two hours before dark when the big show started in the north. On the clouds over the horizon you could see the reflected fireballs and even a few stray Hiveloc round burning up at the end of their range. The sound of the battle didn't carry over the distance but you could feel the ground shocks through the suspension.

I began to worry. The operations officer didn't mention any projected offensives, which meant only that he didn't know of any. But the rumor mills hadn't any poop on any sort of dust up. Now the north was alive with micronukes and Hivelocs. Somebody had guessed wrong.

"Mateland!" I was sitting on the forward glacis of my buggy, catching some fresh air, when the north lit up. I hammered at the hatch over the driver with the butt of my side arm. "Mateland, heads up." He poked his hat out of the hatch, blinking at the light. I could feel the hover tick over under me. "Trouble Jake?"

"North."

He looked over that way, then turned back to me. "So?"

"I've got a feeling about that dust, tell the troop to prep their buggies for micks." I slid down and blew my nose clear. We'd gotten a dose of some Virus-IV about six months back that had left me with a constant cold.

"Copacetic Jake, but if it's a zilch you'll get a horselaugh." I slapped my sidearms over my shoulder and walked towards some ruins to our left. I wanted to talk to the MI topkick who's lot were bedded down with us. "Prep them, tell the other troop they'd better get up too. I'll worry about the laughter later." The ground was broken, dried up from the long summer and churned to a powder from us and the Micks. The MI had dug in between a smashed up church and three Micks heavy tanks that had blew up when we took the place about a month ago. The top was standing out by the tank that had the three Micks melted into their armor. "What do you think, Sergeant?"

"Don't know, Captain." He was in his armor, towering over me by a half meter between the NPC and his own long bones. "Heard anything?"

"Nothing. We're prepping the buggies though." I looked to the north again. A flash lit up half the sky. "Word to the wise I suppose, you need any small arms munitions?" He shook his head.

"We pick up any more armor?"

"We got eight hovers, six missile tanks and the orphan heavy. That's all Sector Command left us when BEECH-V started."

He turned and looked at me from under his visor. His armor was a dirty, faded green, scarred here and there with field repairs. He was the oldest man of his platoon, just as I was the old man of the Buggies. We'd see our twenty-first year soon, if we were lucky. "I wonder," he said, looking back to the north, "just how bad they want our CP?" A roll of thunder, then a pressure wave passed over, plucking gently at my jumper.

"There's your answer," I turned and doubled back to my hover. Mateland had the turbines hot and the hover buttoned down when I got back. I sneaked through to the driver's cockpit and began stripping in. "Any dope come down yet?"

Mateland came on the line from the ECM station. "That wind was a ten-key nuke--brigade says that the Micks have penetrated our front."

I grunted, buttoning down my hatch, then keyed into the Command network for situation reports. According to the battlefield intelligence boys had thrown about three battalions of armor into our MI, then gone to work on our main line of resistance. We were in for it. Things were "Fluid," meaning things were coming unstuck in a very unfunny way. "The troop mounted yet?"

"Yeah, everybody's on line and hot." Some more data came over the brigade link. I fed it in Mateland's screen. "MI drone reports an Ogre coming down the pike?"

"That's what brigade said, hope we don't see that one." I strapped my self into the chair, watching my readouts come alive. My mouth was dry and I could feel the sweat under my skin-tights. I let my reflexes take over, I activated the computers, fed power to the gun controls and tested all the circuits. Everything was up. "We're on line Mateland, masher the old man that we are go. Tell the troop to lift on my dust."

"Got you."

I idled the vanes for a minute watching the digitals for hot spots or harmonics. I went for halfwobble, rocking us clear of the mud flat we'd bedded in a week ago. Dust billowed as small rocks clanged off the skirts. I put her in a neutral turn and checked out the rest of the troop. Gordy and Rosco were clear and skidding off to the sides to clear fire lines. Rube was still rocking his craft clean. He was my worry, a new boy. He'd come in with the last repelle draft and I'd drawn him. New boys always worried me. They could be as deadly to a troop as the Micks. "Lance to three, little more rev's."

"Roger Lance, Rube's hover broke clear. "Lifting."
"Roger that, take up thirds."
He dropped back a bit, covering the rear and ready to bounce over us if needed.

The truck came into view. I was in time to see one of our GEVs come hollering over the foothills to the north. I spun about and dropped to it's spindly legs which rippled across the plains in front of me, then another blip, and I turned and saw it. Half the GEV headlight went out, and the GEV had no idea it was firing.

It's cherry. Mateland had an odd tone to his voice.

"Off-the-cuff, bloody cherry. Missiles, all it's guns. I didn't spot a single track out of place. It's cherry!"

"Judus!" I got on the command link to the CP. "Troop B, Lance. Ogre is a Mark Three, undamaged. Missile armed. You have a hour to rejoin the rest of the squadron when the Ogre swerved towards the skirmish line. "What's that thing doing? OR LOOK OUT!" The GEV fired on the line of GEVs, smashing away with all it's guns and missiles. Three fires simply fell apart under the guns. Another over staggered off and grounded, it's engine compartments shredded. Missiles on hovers?"

"Got four of them, Mateland whispered into the mike. "Rosco's down but he might slope off if we can't track it."

"Hang on. I dived every pound of thrust I had aft. The two surviving GEVs came slashing in, trying to draw fire from the crippled one. The Ogre didn't even nibble, it fired it's main battery and the second enemy. Nothing was left but a ten meter crater.

"Lance to troop, form on me!"

I led the hovers in. The missile tanks worried me they would salvo in about ninety seconds. I acknowledged and flashed part of my fire away at the main battery. Then the missiles landed, blanking out our screens. When they cleared, the main gun was in a firing zone in the side of the beast. Smoke billowed out of it and dribbles of molten APC armor started to spatter over. The Ogre lurched on, overrunning one of the missile tanks and scattering some MI that had tried to get to the track.

"In there again, register on the secondaries."

"In there again, register on the secondaries."

"I'm getting the MI off the ground...er..." the MI turned and began to fall to the ground.

"Goin' in Rube, on the secondaries."

"MI small arms bounding off the APC armor, tumbling in mad trajectories back into our path. Our own Hiveloc rounds were gouging half meter square chunks out of the turret. I got a flash of one MI clinging to a turret with a jimpet bomb, then we were past and the missiles landed. They20 had to slide across, the MI's on the top tumbling us, but the turret was dead.

"Pull that barrel, now!"

I told my gunner on the CP to raise the CP. Mateland cut into the link before I could raise them. "Who's left, Mateland?"

"Thirds, three, Jake."

I flicked on the link. "Leader to me."

"Go ahead leader."

"How's your ship?"

"Minor damage only, sir."

"Okay, stick tight."

I dropped the link and laughed. It was my new hobby. The one I thought I'd lose the first time we ran into the MI. "He's getting on, eh Mateland?"

"Yeah, at least we know how the buggies get their fine young fools."

"Whatever. Let's hit that son of a bitch again."

I boosted the power up the radius max and chased the beast down. Bits and chunks of equipment flashed by, MI lay strewn about mixed with fragments of track and armor. I jinked the hovers to the side to avoid the hulk of the Heavy tank, ground down to half it's volume.

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Game reviews

Computer games-by-mail are a fast-growing sector of the industry. Flying Buffalo’s STARWEB has been one of the best in the industry, a science fiction magazine and thus is growing like the proverbial dandelion.

STARWEB is a science fiction game of stars and star fleets. Players have a choice of six different identities: Apostles, Artifact Collectors, Berserkers, Empire Builders, Merchants, or Pirates.

Each identity has different objectives: the Apostles gets points for converting populations to its belief; the Artifact Collector gets points by finding artifacts found on various worlds; the Berserker gets points for killing human population; the Empire Builder gets points for controlling worlds; the Merchant gets points for unloading consumer goods on worlds; and the Pirate gets points for plundering worlds.

There are also ninety standard artifacts which give points to the different types of players (Example, Gold Sword, which both Merchant and Berserker can use). And there are special artifacts which give points to any player (Example, Treasure of Polaris, which gives twenty points to its owner per turn).

The game is won by points. At the beginning of the game, players choose numbers between one thousand and ten thousand. These numbers are averaged, and the game is over when one player reaches the average number of points. The exact number, however, is kept secret until the end.

The game costs ten dollars to begin (which includes a two-dollar deposit), good for five rounds. After that, rounds cost one dollar each.

The original directions were mimeographed in a manual which was hard to understand, so most original players like myself have had to play by trial and error. A second edition of the rules was printed, with a shiny cover and better artwork. It had many rules clarifications and examples which makes play much easier.

To add to the complexity, moves have to be written by the players in a form called shuffle, an art which only a computer. There is no provision for replay, so that if a player goes, he pays the consequences. An example of an order moving a fleet of two worlds would be F480 W505 W498. To attach an artifact to a fleet, the order is VS07F411. To build seven ships the order is to move seven ships to Fleet 480, the order would be W711B7F480.

Result of each move come in a computer printout, which requires decoding. A partial example of one line would be W711 (505, 498) MASH (30, 3, 51, 100, T/0-2, RMS 10, I SHP=1, P SHP=2). Translated, this means that World 711 is adjacent to Worlds 505 and 498. World 711 belongs to the Empire Builders, a 50 percent industrial, 3 Raw Material Production, 51 Population, 100 Population Limit, and was owned two turns. It has a space stockpile of 10, has one I Ship and 2 P Ships defending it. There are further codes telling what they are and how many ships they have, which fleets went through, artifacts present, etc.

Each player is given a home world, with industry, raw materials, and population to start. He may build ships equal to the smallest number of these items. The ships may either be attached to fleets (also called "keys"), or may be "I Ships" (defending a world’s industry), or "P-Ships" (defending a world’s population). In addition, each five industry can build one more industry, or can increase the population limit by one.

A player may use his fleets exploring and claiming or developing other planets in other worlds. These worlds may also have certain artifacts which may or may not be claimed. Player may claim the ship worlds owned by other players, he may either negotiate with them, or fight them, or both. A fleet may move up to three worlds per turn. Ships may also carry raw materials or artifacts.

The are rules for ambush, for battles between fleets or between fleets and worlds.
There are also unnamed worlds which already have 1 or P ships which must be destroyed before a player can claim that world. (This little goody is not really the rule.)

Diplomatic messages may be sent to other players either through the message system, or (once you have his name and address), by direct mail.

Turns take three or four weeks, so that a year's players may have done fifteen turns (approximately), and the game may still not be finished.

As an Empire Builder in an early STARWEB, using a single digit number, I felt at round six that I had had it. I was up against an unfavourable interpretation of the rules, plus a number of my own stupid errors, and that it just wasn't worth the money.

But I decided to stick out a couple more turns, and by turn eight I was hooked. It began to be fun. I could hardly wait for the next turn to arrive by mail.

Here are some ideas for prospective and beginning STARWEB players:

1. Make a map of the known universe, adding and changing as new stars are discovered. I trace around a penny, and draw lines between the worlds that I discover (by the Starweb). This helps me visualize which stars are connected with which when I want to move fleets.

2. Consider the speed of the fleets (a la board games) so you can move them on your map and see where they are and may go. I do this and on the player's move counter I print the word "Moved" so that I know which fleet has moved that turn, when I'm writing in the rules.

3. I found it very helpful to make a 3 x 5 card file of the known worlds, both mine and those of other players. On the cards, I list the factors such as industry, raw materials, population, etc., as well as the number of I Ships and P Ships at each world. Each turn, the information is updated. The same information, of course, can be obtained from the computer printout, but this is a double check against my own and computer errors. Also a Merchant could use the cards to tell how many times his goods are consumed on each world, a Pirate could record plunder, an Apostle could record converted population, and so on.

4. Always double-check your turn order. I learned the hard way. It is too easy to write "F601" when you mean "M601" and change the whole intent of the order.

5. Use any opportunity you have to negotiate with other players, preferably as soon as you become aware of them. This gives you an idea of what identity they have, and also what their intentions are (if they will tell you). And if a player won't answer your message, you can guess he might, for instance, be a Berserker.

If you are beginning STARWEB for the first time, or thinking about joining a STARWEB game, keep in mind that it will take a few turns for you to get your eye in with the various codes and moves. If you can get past the early errors and discouragement, you will find that STARWEB can be a fascinating game.

You might even become STARWEB-holic like myself. I am looking forward to playing a number of games simultaneously, and trying a different role in each game.

The basic rules pertain to movement and combat. MI movement is either by walking one hop ahead four hexes (at a cost of only one movement point). Combat is of two types--MI mobile, which involves launching a nuclear missile that hits any hex on the board you want it to, affecting a circle of six hex radius. The second type is the MI type combat is regular shoot-the-bastard type combat. Damage done in both types is figured on the cross-indexing a die roll with the number of hexes distance between the attacker and his target. As long as the MI can surrender, the MI can combine attack strength, which has the effect of lessening the range on the combat tables.

All three scenarios are clumsy to set up and extremely simple to actually play. The first, "Squad Sweeper", has the MI forces raiding a skinny town. Before starting, the skinny player has to locate on the blank hex sheet a total of 49 counters--21 buildings, 24 infantry platoons, and 6 armored platoons. If any army is stationed inside a building, appropriate counters are statued on the building counter. If they are also stationed on the roof and, yep, you stack them on top. The Terran player automatically knows the oppositions.

The objective of the Terran player is to destroy 13 points worth of Skinny buildings. There are three Class I buildings worth 3 points each, six Class II buildings worth 2 points, and twelve Class I buildings worth a single point apiece. So, far, so good. However, the ten Terran have to each operate separately since the Skinny will lob one or two Masons at a group. To attack a building, you have to be adjacent to it with Skinny platoons all over the top. If you're not likely to have a "bomb farm" with every building you take. Every MI lost cancels out the point value of at least one of the bombs. If you're not lucky, the Skinny player will risk some buildings to be sure of getting the Terran commander with a nuke, the MI forces have little chance of meeting the victory conditions.

The second scenario is "Operation Royalty" in which the fearless MI descend into the Arachnid tunnels to capture/kill the queen and/or leaders. Since they're basically after information, the MI players will let themselves be taken to a cave. An MI player will be able to capture or are forced to kill determines the degree of victory.

This scenario has problems too. The MI can now execute the tunnels and where they lead--even the hidden ones usable only by the bugs. The single most interest is that a player can use MI to make it extremely clumsy to set up--the position of any bugs in the tunnels is not marked by a counter, but is recorded using an inadequate coordinate system. Once and MI passes within one hex of them, or if they move, they are then marked by a counter. One little logical fallacy establishes that an MI can only recognize an unmoving bug at a distance of one hex--even in the caverns, apparently--otherwise he doesn't know anything is there. Despite these fallings, it is potentially the best scenario of the three.

"Encounter" portrays a firefight between two Terran MI squads and a single Thoark MI squad. In case you're wondering, this isn't in Heinlein's book.) This seemingly straightforward scenario is the one that simulates the Terran MI dropping from an orbiting ship. For all the effect the terrain features have a blank hex sheet could be used. Since the winner is the player who destroys the most enemy units, and as the Thoarks are outnumbered, the Terran player has little chance of winning. "Operation Royalty" plays the longest, averaging a half-hour. The other two run about fifteen minutes each, with generally dull action. All three are two player games, with no provisions made for more than two players.

RIFT TROOPER is available from Dave Casalino Co., Attack International, 314 Edgely Avenue, Glenroy, Pa., 19038 for $8.00. I would recommend you read or re-read STARSHIP TROOPERS before playing. It will give you an idea of what is being simulated.

RIFT TROOPER
THE DEATHTRAP EQUALIZER DUNGEON
a review

by Steve Jackson

This is the second "solitaire dungeon" to be published by Flying Buffalo. Like its predecessor, Buffalo Castle, it is worth its price to any fantasy role-playing fan who doesn't have a steady supply of fellow-gamers.

In case you haven't run into the "solitaire dungeon" idea, it works like this: You want to go dungeon-adventuring, but you don't have a DungeonMaster. So you sit down with the solitaire dungeon and a set of applicable FRP rules (in this case, Tunnels and Trolls). Your character enters the dungeon, and you read what he/she encounters in the dungeon book. The character's options at that point are described. You choose one or more of the appropriate numbered paragraph for that option, and read what happened to you. You may be rich; you may be dead; you may have more decisions to make. Fun.

The Deathtrap Equalizer Dungeon (hereafter DED) is a step up from Buffalo Castle, which was only for first-level fighters. The DED can be played by any type of character, and magic (up to 5th level) is allowed, and handled by an ingenious if limited system. (Consider all the possible spells a magic user MIGHT throw in a tight situation... only one character at a time may enter - no armies.

DED is organized in a different way, too. Buffalo Castle was laid out like a regular dungeon, with lots of interconnecting rooms and passages. The DED is composed of 16 separate adventures which do not interconnect; you pick one at a time. Your DED host, Umslopagaas of the Shy Trolls, will put you into an adventure, and (if you survive), back out. This is an interesting gimmick, and it obviously made a dungeon a lot easier to organize. 16 little flowcharts instead of one big one.

On the whole, the DED adventures are ingenious and a lot of fun. They are a touch unsubtle in places; you get a situation like "Behind one of these doors there are a million gold pieces; behind another door is a demon which will kill you and all your relatives; behind another door is a pizza. Choose one. "I made that one up, but you get the idea. Fast rewards and sudden death sometimes hinge more on random chance than on the player's (or character's) cleverness. However, in all fairness, there are a number of situations where logic will help considerably. A dungeon needs a little of both. DED is also highly sexist. There are two separate situations which offer a high probability of amorous adventure for the male characters. Nothing in it for the ladies, though.

The only other problem is the monsters. There's nothing in here that a mediocre fighter can't be sure of taking apart by himself - especially if he's got a hellbound coated with dragon venom, or some- thing like that. On the other hand, if you're limited to "straight" swords and no poison, you'd still die in there.

Typos are death in a solitaire dungeon, and DED has a few; most of these are listed in an errata sheet. Liz Danforth's illustrations, as always, add a lot. The bigger ones (especially the picture of Umslopagaas) are excellent; some of the smaller ones were either done in haste or badly reproduced, but they still break up the pages.

On the whole, it's a lot of fun. Generally, the GM would blow it, kid, but the gods are kind. They hate to see a really good man drown. They turn you into a blind white fish. Close the book. It's all over for you.

One final note: I'm pleased to see that Flying Buffalo is planning to do a whole series of solitaire dungeons. After you run through one of these a few times, it can get old - but if you hunt around you can keep trying off. So it works out.

The Deathtrap Equalizer Dungeon is $3 from Flying Buffalo, Inc., P.O. Box 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252. To play it, you also need a copy of Tunnels and Trolls (also from Flying Buffalo).

WAR OF THE SKY GALLEONS
a review

by Steve List

WSG is one of a trio of games collectively called WARRIORS OF THE GREEN PLANET. This game deals with aerial warfare, the other two with land and psionic combat. A three page history in the rules explains the background for the trilogy:

"About 60 years from now, a radical tilt of the earth's axis occurs, leading to catastrophic geologic and climactic changes, and the obligatory end of civilization as we know it. One scrap of knowledge that survives, however, is the technique of inducing certain diamonds to self destruct, releasing laser light. These precious power gems become prized for both civil and military purposes. It is also discovered that if one uses laser light to fuse hydrogen, the resulting helium has 40% more lifting power than normal helium." This makes the sky galleons possible (Presumably the vast energy released by the fusion isn't a bothersome side effect, as no mention is made of it).

Rather than being airships of the usual pattern, gondolas under gas bags, these galleons have rigid double hulls of a super paper mache, with gas in the outer section, cargo in the inner, and crew space and weapons on a deck above the whole thing. In fact, the cover art shows a beautiful 19th century style barkentine under full sail with a pair of gun houses fore and aft suggestive of a Fletcher-class destroyer. In the foreground can be seen an apparently mastless vessel
with muzzle loading cannon in broadside batteries. Esthetics aside, this sort of construction leads to ships oddly suited for aerial warfare. The main batteries are mounted fore and aft and have upward and downward play, but the secondary batteries (of less range and power) fire only broadside with upward play. The main guns of these ships are in their ends, and in that respect they resemble galleys more than galleons. They should fight in line abreast rather than line ahead, and the use of boarding as a tactic reinforces this. The fields of fire of the main and secondary batteries do not overlap, but each ship counter occupies two hexes and so may lie in more than one field. Ships can also damage each other by dropping rock ballast on a target below them.

There is another tactical idiosyncrasy to contend with; ships must always move their full movement allowance. Since the four types in the game have three different MAs among them, maintaining heterogeneous formations is nearly impossible.

In play, the game bears some resemblance to WOODEN SHIPS & IRON MEN, with the third spatial dimension added. There are nine possible altitudes from ground level up, and forests and hills can be real hazards to low-flying ships. Play is sequential, with each player turn made up of six phases: Altitude decision, Degrazing, Movement, Grappling, Laser Combat and Boarding, in that order. Ships take only Weapons and Buoyancy hits - two of the former knocks out all ammunition, with further ones being treated as Buoyancy hits. These can be absorbed up to a point, at which the ship goes into a controlled descent or it crashes. There are also a variety of critical hits ranging from loss of fire-power to immediate destruction.

Four scenarios are given, but writing your own is easy to do. The game itself is easy to learn and plays swiftly. For those who can swallow the "science" fiction background and overlook the absurd engineering it postulates, this can be a highly enjoyable game. In terms of physical and design quality, it is on a par with other Fact and Fantasy products. One unusual aspect may turn some people off. The bulk of the game counters are mounted and die cut, but the ships themselves are printed on adhesive-backed paper, and must be mounted and cut by hand.

WAR OF THE SKY GALLIONS is available from Metagaming & Fantasy Games, P.O. Box 1472, Maryland Hts., Mo. 63043 for $5.50.

a piece of notepaper. They serve to record the progressive destruction of the Ogre.

When setting up the game, the non-Ogre player locates his command post, missile cannons, armored tanks, and infantry within the rubble-area of the map. The rubble serves to hinder movement of anything less than an Ogre. The Ogre enters the map from the river at the far end. From this point, a description of the play reads like Steve Jackson's famous article in TSG #9. Notes on the Ogre. Combat results are designed so that the Ogre is blown apart a piece at a time. On the other hand, anything an Ogre hits, if not totally demolished, is at least temporarily out of action.

The Ogre's sole objective is to survive, the Ogre must be immobilized while it is still out of range—a weaponless Ogre can ram and crush it an immobile Ogre can blow it to bits. If the defending general becomes too concerned about destroying the Ogre's arms, the brute will stoically drive right through the post. This is invariably fatal to generals, but doesn't even bruise Ogres.

Strategy is, of course, dependent on the players' skill and the composition and arrangement of forces. In general, the Gey's should not be overestimated—they're fast, yes, but the Ogre is faster and has a longer weapons range. Howitzers are wasted at the edges of the board—locate them centrally so they can fire to either side. Ignore his weapons and shoot for the threads—you'll loose some tanks until the Ogre runs out of missiles, but unless you can thin him down by that your own tanks can keep up, the Ogre can drive straight for the command post, ignoring anything in its way.

If you're the Ogre, keep as far away from those howitzers as you can. Don't waste missiles on them, use them on the enemy missile tanks—they have a range greater than your guns, and unlike the howitzers, they're expendable. Your mass is probably your greatest weapon—ram as often as convenient. If this doesn't kill the enemy tanks right off, it at least knocks them out for the next turn and makes them cheaper to kill.

Ogre is attractive, easy to learn—inexpensive, and fun to play. What more can a gamer ask? Ogre is available from Metagaming Concepts for $2.50 for all subscribers and $2.95 for others.

BATTLE FOR ANDROMEDA

a review

by Robert C. Kirk

Metagaming Concept's first MicroGame, Ogre, designed by Steve Jackson, is everything it is advertised to be. It's a lot of game in a little package. In fact, I was somewhat surprised when my copy arrived—the entire game comes in a 4 by 7 inch package. True, it is advertised as being small in format...

Anyway, the heavy paper map folds out to 8 by 14 inches and the sixteen page rules booklet not only gives basic and advanced game rules, but fits in several optional rules as well. Miniaturized illustrations of the excellent graphics by Winchell Chung which illustrate the text are printed on the counters which come in three shades (white, light grey, and dark grey) to facilitate multi-player play. They depict the various armed units and, of course, the Ogre.

The rules both read and play well. Read through them, play the basic game once with the booklet for reference, and you will have learned a new game. The only record sheets you need are easily whipped up in about 10 seconds on
come out and say so. None of this cutey stuff. Besides, consider how much you make off a one-word review at our going rate.

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TO: CBO  (By the way, Ben, what does the "CU" stand for?)
FROM: Stevie Wonder
SUBJECT: That review again.

Yes; very perceptive of you. It IS a lousy game. If you want the gory details, you can have them. But I've always wanted to totally demolish some turkey game with a one-word review, and this looked like my best chance for a long time. I'd even forego the 49th that an average review would earn me...

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TO: SJ
FROM: CBO  (None of your business.)
SUBJECT: Review

OK. If it means so much to you, we'll print the Ugh. I expect people will get the idea. But can you send me a few things, like the publisher and the price, that people might want to know, while you're at it, how about at least telling me why the game is so ugh?

___

TO: CBO
FROM: SJ
SUBJECT: Battle for Andromeda

OK. It's published by Taurus Ltd. There's no price marked on the package. As to what's wrong with it: where should I begin? Components first, I guess. The counters aren't too bad - there are six sets, big heavy stock, bright-colored and die-cut. They have silhouettes and/or designs on them; some also have the initials for their type, but most don't. With practice, you could learn to tell them apart. The map is on heavy stock - just a big picture of a spiral nebula with red hexgrid ss superimposed. But the rulebook...

You know it's going to be bad when you see the cover. Two models of the starship Enterprise are fighting with a little Buck Rogers ship and two WWII floating mines - one with a double fuselage and the other with pterodactyl wings. (Well, that's what they LOOK like.) Inside, the type is little, tiny, and blurred. But that wouldn't be so bad if the rules made sense, which they don't.

Here I have to admit that I haven't actually PLAYED this game. I doubt anybody anywhere has ever played it. I don't think it's possible. I've spent too much time already on this rulebook, and I sure wouldn't start to play, even if I had a set of opponents who understood.

These rules are totally lacking in organization. There is no table of contents and no evident logical order - and the book is 43 PAGES. In TINY type on 8 1/2 x 11 sheets. Imagine leafing through THAT to find one small rule. And, when you FIND the rule, you won't understand it, because the writing is truly god-awful. Mixes rules, examples, and pseudo-science explanations in long, rambling, disorganized sentences. It is the next thing to incomprehensible. I quote: "One quality that redeems the DLC and DMC type ships and gives them a purpose in being is its destructibility; that is, not only do they have the multiplicative value against the more numerous DD craft, but they can attack any type of craft in hexes adjacent to them, but just in the hex they occupy." That is an AVERAGE sentence. What do you suppose it means?

Even if the rules were written so that you could understand them, I doubt very many people would want to play this. Much too long and complicated. As closely as I can make out, each of a player's major ships or bases (maybe a total of 15) has to choose, each turn, between 23 different "combat options", each of which is a different balance of power allocation to about 10 different functions. Of course, when ships take damage, they lose HP, but the HP back up, up to a point. Et cetera.

The movement rules are equally daunting. To the confusion, the board is stated to have 13 levels, of which the one we see is evidently the middle one. But the only way to tell what level a counter is on is to have it written down!

I could go on like this for pages, but I won't. Instead, a hypo-

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TO: SJ
FROM: CBO
SUBJECT: YOUR REVIEW

I see your point. Running a review like that would be pretty rough. On the other hand, don't people deserve to know when a game that has a lot of hype is so totally bad that they'll never be able to play it?

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TO: CBO
FROM: SJ
SUBJECT: stuff

Yeah - maybe. One thing, though - are you short of space for material for the next issue? I have to think that my one-word review would give you problems.
tended to lure the unwary gamer into learning something about a completely non-military subject. What a sneaky trick!

S.P.I. is attractively packaged in a yellow-orange Bookcase-type hardbox. Components include a sorting tray, a two-piece 22" x 34" mounted map in three sheets, 400 counters (in green, yellow, blue, and brown), a rule booklet, auxiliary charts for 4 players, and two large sheets of play money and Corruption chits. S.P.I. has solved its mapbox problems, for those who were disappointed by the earlier versions, which were wrinkled. The play money is a nice surprise, too; it's printed on both sides in pliable green, comes in five denominations, and appears quite realistic. The only markings on the bills are the denominations (in numbers, not in words) and the engraving swirls, so I suspect we'll be seeing them in future games.

The counter mix will come as a shock to conventional wargamers. Of the 400 counters, only about 100 represent actual "units". This conforms with the playing area, which is only about 4½ actual map. The remaining area is taken up by the economic record charts used by each player. The remaining counters are indicators to be placed on the chart, and map.

The map covers the continental United States and southern Canada. A standard hex grid is used, but the map is also divided by shadings into about 60 areas, representing control units. Each area supports 1,000,000 people at a subsistence level. The map also indicates the locations of usable resources, such as fuel, metals, and undamaged factories. Terrain is simple: clear terrain, rough terrain, mountain hexes, rivers, lakes, and ocean (for water transport). The hexes are labeled with the number where everyone's home city used to be. The last are indicated by skull and crossbones. It is possible to traverse a hex, but it is expensive. And causes radiation burns if your army winters there. All areas have equal agricultural potential; the political control to slip and fail in some areas. Taxation provides the money needed for various purposes. Taxation can be increased by local control; while excess taxation causes reduction in industrial output. Depletion and depreciation reduce stocks of food, metals, and fuel, and reduce numbers of mechanized and transportation points. This is a marvelous game. They even provide income tax forms for the players. I get so involved in the economics that I've never used the military units at all. For one thing, my economy's too weak to support any army.

After the Holocaust is available from S.P.I., 44 E. 23rd St., New York, for $12.

SWORDS & SPELLS

a review

by Robert R. Taylor

SWORDS AND SPELLS is, as the subtitle indicates, a set of rules for large scale miniature battles based on the game DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS.

Basically, S & S is a very elaborate and expanded updating of the CHAINMAIL rules. S & S is extremely well done. The layout is excellent, the artwork is good and appropriate, and the rules are superb. They are written in a clear, easy style that allows for quick assimilation.

The rules are particularly strong in one of the most difficult areas of fantasy miniatures—magic. The spell casting and spell chart make applying D & D magic to miniatures very simple and straightforward. Also, the sample game in the appendix gives a number of examples of magic, and this helps in further clarifying this often nebulous area of fantasy wargaming.

The other rules are equally logical and concise, and make S & S a highly recommended buy for someone just getting interested in miniatures wargaming. Of course, to use S & S you must already have a copy of D & D and all the supplements.

Although the author (Gary Gygax) obviously spent a great deal of time and effort on these rules, especially the magic section, some concessions were made to allow for a more streamlined approach to miniatures. This has led around S & S to have a nice balance between complexity and playability. The staff of TSR should be congratulated for another fine piece of work.

SWORDS AND SPELLS is available for $3.95 from TSR Hobbies, Inc., POB 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147, or from Metagaming.
Dear Editor,

I borrowed a copy of Godfire from a friend, and was planning to review it, but changed my mind. I didn’t cut out the counters, and I don’t think I could just test a game without playing it. Hence, this letter.

Godfire brought tears of pain to my eyes. The ideas are present, and the artwork is lovely, but I feel that the game is a white elephant which will be very difficult to play. As you predicted, it is a physically large game, in fact, too large. If the full components are laid out for play, a complete pool table or table tennis table is needed for comfort. The scenarios using only one or two pieces are the worst. Why is so much space needed? You were trying to save the players from doing paperwork. By using regular hexes and a written altitude record, the map could have been reduced to 2' square. I have a less harrow with system sheets, but these are only used to effect in the Advanced Game.

This leads to my second complaint: the components for the Advanced Game seem almost an afterthought. The Gigabuck counters are too thin; they will be mutilated and torn unless you put them on cardboard as presented, they will be difficult to lift from a flat surface. You have not provided indicators for the system sheet, this is merely an annoyance. A player may be expected to provide dice, paper, and pencils, but we should not have to make counters from nothing (a practice, I fear, which even GMs use on occasion, especially in its simplest form). Jang that we move GBS through space unscorched. Your memories may be good, but mine is poor, I would value any additional indicators to remind us which GBs belonged to which players. I cannot comment on the Advanced Game, except that it seems a quantum leap beyond the Basic Game; a leap some players may not be able to make. I think that some of the economics should have been incorporated in the Basic Game.

The final problem that bothered me was the technological promise of the game mechanisms, but light travel and instant communication is feasible to me. The combat system is incomprehensible. The combat system is incomprehensible. Missiles launched through the air by the Mr. The "technological breakthrough" allowing 6 cells movement per turn is bewildering. A faster-than-light drive should allow much faster travel; perhaps you were trying to prevent too devastating an advantage.

Norman S. Howe
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada

I apologize to the readers of TSG. There were two errors in my article TANK: Present-Future-Ogre (TSG10). In the first case I stated that the Cruise Missile's TERRAIN Contour Matching guidance system used visual recognition of the terrain it was passing over. I misinterpreted a somewhat vaguely worded article. A more recent article described the guidance as a combination of internal (magnetic compass, gyro-compass, and computer memory) and a system that compares the actual altitude changes of the terrain below the missile with stored memory of altitude changes for a much larger area along the missile's course. This changes against a computer memory topographical map. Another variation on the guidance, which is under development, would use electromagnetic anomalies in the Earth's magnetic field along the course instead of an altimeter. Although both of these systems would be useful in a cybernetic tanks guidance, it is not the visual guidance system.

In the second case the sentence "With a one kiloton nuke, detonation, infantry in the open are vulnerable only at 300 meters or less." should have read, "With a one kiloton nuke, detonation, infantry in the open are vulnerable only at 400 meters, but tank crewmen are vulnerable only at 300 meters." For these errors, I again apologize to the readers of TSG.

Charles R. Bowes
Colo. Sprgs., Colo.

For TSNG10, Shane Gad's "SC Tournament" at WARG '80 discussion leads with a bang. Is this the kind of article I like, dealing in a well-rounded manner with both strategies and playability. At least I got to explicitly mention one of the adjustments of SC rules made in the tournament—namely, allowing for a conquered colony's industrial output the first Production Year after its conquest, rather than the delay one re QUED in the rules—both that "variant" and the fact that population increases were permitted to purchase their own GT's answered a question that has bothered me for some time: how players, in accounts I've read of SC games, were able to turn around and win when I'm still scrapping to field ATKS. As for the strategies he advances, I found the Population Shuttle to be well, well, it sounds like its against the rules (it isn't, I know, but it still doesn't seem kosher) and quite good will the population increases do if they spend all their 1U points on gts to shuttle back and forth? The Grappling Walls should have used (to a degree) once or twice, planting "minimal colonies" of 4M/4IU to hold "strategic stars", usually MT worlds, to extend my radius of operation. The "pure" GM plan strikes me as risky, since if your enemy lucks into your industrial colony with any sort of adequate expeditionary force you might as well resign; cut it as fine as you like, but some of the output of the colony should be diverted to MBs and ESCs before another player can reach it. Finally, in the Grissy Crittenden's 'Is it legal for a player to burn off one of his own colonies?' Chris Chyba's "Phantastic Probabilit", and Chet Edwards' "Alien Intelligences are a pair of '7's. The first, a good study of one of the many aspects of SC, could have used a bit more work, dealing with chances of finding a system only with habitable planet, but even so it was a good study of the game. I'm something of a mathematician, so I could be prejudiced. The other article is proof that the basic SC game may be needlessly adapted and altered, each variant presenting new challenges and play possibilities. Well, I thought the ATKS layout should also get a 7. Now that he's done the wars of SC, and depictions of the CT and SCT, I trust he will bring his wonderful skill to the missile installations and industrial facilities, if only for the fun of it.

Charles Bowles for TANK and Shane Gad for SC, "Duel" get 6's from me, the first as a nice "off-the-cuff" speculation on the possible future of the game. For being a short, tidy look at the role of the OGRE from the point of view of the "bloody infantry" who, like as not, will still be the only arm of the military that can occupy and hold ground. I'll also give Steve Jackson a 6 for his workmanlike adaptation of 6-sided dice to the use of "exotic" probabilities.

I tend to gauge reviews as "average" at the best of times, so Robert Taylor and Steve Jackson get a brace of 5's for "Metamorphosis Alpha" and "War of the Worlds", both of which were properly informative. Mr. Taylor also gets a 5 for his "WARCON III Report" mostly because of its brevity, which is understandable; an adequate treatment of the Con would have taken up most of the issue.

Finally, I'm afraid I didn't care much for Mr. Rahman's "The Dust of Blanas". Although his undead wizard was an interesting concept, I found his presentation less than adequate—I'm still not certain in which milieu it is set—and the ending a bit too much Deus ex Machina. The overall art, as usual, defies a quantified qualification.

Likewise, I shan't pass judgment on the other features. Being news, reviews of books, ratings, ads and "plugs", they are, and they should be, "Where (You're Going). I read them, and find them interesting, but I scarcely subject them to a critical appraisal.

The issue overall gets about a 7.5 in my judgment. And you might like to know that the late H. Beam Piper wrote a number of military and military-oriented SF yarns, including PLANET, LONELY CALVAN OF OTHERWHER, "Ministry of Disturbance"—as well as the classic LITTLE FUZZY and its sequel, THE OTHER HUMAN RACE.

C. Griffin Mitchell, III
Merritt Island, Florida
The only thing I don’t like about Ogre is the fact that it is difficult to distinguish between the light gray and dark gray counters. After playing several games of it, my friends and I began thinking of some optional rules that might help to make it more realistic. Here are some of them:

(1) To be used in conjunction with mine counters. When a GEV crosses a mined hex, don’t roll to see if it activated the mine because they travel mostly above the ground on a cushion of air. If a GEV crosses a mined hex, don’t roll to see if it activated the mine because they travel mostly above the ground on a cushion of air.

(2) Exploding Power Plants - When an Ogre Rams another Ogre, roll one die. For every number rolled, half the counters on the combined movement factors expended by the two Ogres is greater than or equal to 5. However, if both Ogres moved only 2, then roll the die (3+2=5). If either one of them did not roll the die, then roll the die (3+2=5).

Overall, I feel that Ogre is a really great game and I think the microgames are a fantastic idea.

Vernon Thorp
Burnsville, Minn.

My congratulations to Steve Jackson on the fine little game Ogre. More play for the number rolled, but if it hasn’t saved me any time, I just play more games in the same time.

One of the first things that I noticed, though, was the uselessness of heavy tanks. With a range of only 2 hexes they are sitting ducks for secondary batteries, and they make nice door mats for an Ogre to wipe its treads. Far more protected for the same attack strength allocation are two GEVs, with a combined defense of 4 compared to 3, and invulnerability once missiles and main batteries are gone. One way to give Heavy Tanks some worth would be to increase their range to 3. GEVs still look better but it will make tanks more competitive.

Science Fiction wargames seem to be perfectly suited for the Microgame format. One of the problems our society faces is that modern weapons destroy an awful lot in very little time, a problem in maintaining peace, but ideal for carnage loving gamers.

Tracy Harms
Tacoma, Wa.

Our group has been playing Ogre for a while now, and we’ve hit upon an idea that other gamers might like to know. We don’t know how it would work out, since we’ve never had the opportunity to try it, but it just might work out very well.

Instead of using the planetary attack step in SC, you can dispense of that and use the Ogre as well. Each dreadnought could carry 5 Ogres, each Attack 3, and each Escort could carry one. This would add more realism to the planetary attack step than simply burning millions of colonists, which is unrealistic in the first place.

Patrick Brennan
East Hartford, Ct.

The Space Gamer
the science fiction and fantasy game magazine

The Space Gamer is a bimonthly magazine devoted to all aspects of science fiction and fantasy gaming. Features include articles on new and classic game-oriented fiction and stories based on actual game situations, reviews of new games and gaming products, reader-rated game ratings, letters, and more. Subscription information begins with the current issue.

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Designed by Lynn Willis; edited by Steve Jackson; illustrated by Eldian Ehrlich.

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