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THE SPACE GAMER

THE MAGAZINE OF ADVENTURE GAMING

SUNDAY DRIVERS

A ROLE-PLAYING SUPPLEMENT FOR

CAR WARS



"PERIASTRON" — ADVENTURE FOR TRAVELLER
SHAPESHIFTERS: NEW CLASS FOR D&D
JUDGES GUILD ADVENTURES
CUMULATIVE GAME INDEX
NAKED ELF WOMEN
AND 7 PAGES OF REVIEWS

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THE SPACE GAMER

NUMBER 50 — APRIL, 1982

In This Issue

This is issue number 50 of THE SPACE GAMER. We've come a long ways since those mimeograph days — and we hope you'll still be with us to see what we look like when issue 100 comes around. This issue also happens to be the April one, but more on that later.

Our big feature this time is a nine-page CAR WARS supplement . . . featuring a detailed map, new weapons, two completely-worked-out vehicles, and two scenarios. SUNDAY DRIVERS is designed for role-players; it works best with a free-wheeling referee and two to four players. And if you don't have a good referee (yet), the Midville map makes a great duel arena. Just assume the whole town is abandoned, and go to it!

As if one supplement wasn't enough, we also have the third in our Marischal Adventures series — a four-page TRAVELLER adventure. Like the first two, it's in the center of the magazine; you can pull it out and keep it separately.

Other features include an updated game index; a new character class for D&D; and Mike Stackpole's review of several recent Judges Guild offerings. And, as you can see, we're a little bit more colorful in this issue!

One last thing. As I said above, this is the April issue. Therefore, in that time-honored April tradition, nothing I said above was true. In fact, the only serious articles in the whole magazine are on pages 24 and 42. And I am the Emperor Napoleon. Beam me up, Scotty.

—Steve Jackson

ARTICLES

Cumulative Game Index

A guide to every game-related article from TSGs 15-49 16

Shapeshifters * Ronald & Kevin Pehr

A new magical character class for D&D 26

Naked Elf Women * Denis Loubet

Our art director unleashes his second favorite fantasy 42

SPECIAL FEATURE: ADVENTURE GAME SUPPLEMENTS

Sunday Drivers * Stefan Jones & Aaron Allston

Duellists, civilians, police, and bikers in an urban Car Wars free-for-all 5

Periastron * J. Andrew Keith & William H. Keith, Jr.

The third Traveller adventure in the Scotian Huntress series 19

REVIEWS

Judges Guild Adventures * Michael Stackpole 14

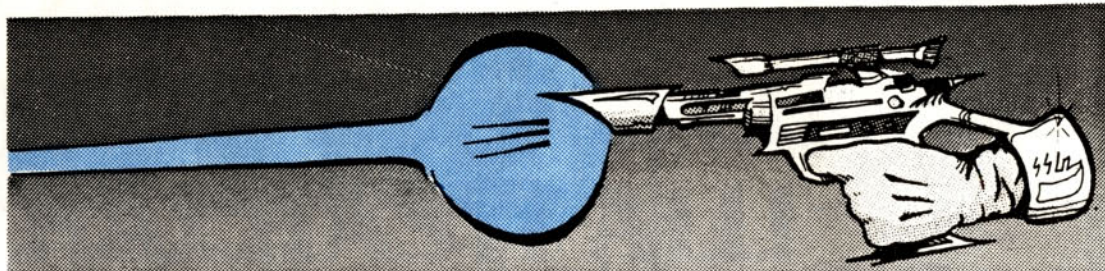
Capsule Reviews 30

GAMES: Introduction to Adventure Gaming, Trailblazer. SUPPLEMENTS: Amazon Mutual Wants You, Blue Frog Tavern, Heroic Expeditions, Legend of the Sky Raiders, The Tower of Indomitable Circumstance. PLAY AIDS: The Companions' Hexagonal and Grid Mapping System, Seldon's Compendium of Starcraft I. COMPUTER GAMES: The Imperial Data Recovery System, Wizardry Revision 2. PLAY-BY-MAIL: Space Battle.

DEPARTMENTS

Where We're Going	2
We're Real Gone	24
Game Master	37
News & Plugs	38
PBM Update	38
Letters	39
Calendar	40
Index to Advertisers	40
Murphy's Rules	40

WHERE WE'RE GOING



From now on, TSG is going to be a little more colorful. Each month, we'll be adding at least one spot color to the interior. This not only lets Denis do fancier illustrations . . . it also means that when we run a map or chart, we can make it more readable. We tried this a few times last year and got generally good responses; this time it's for keeps.

Another (possible) improvement: The TSG advertising picture is beginning to look better than it has for the last few months. There's a direct correlation between the number of ads we get and the number of pages in the magazine . . . more ads, more pages! So, if things continue well, we may be able to get some issues up to 48 pages this year. But you people are going to have to write some more good articles for us. We'd especially like to see:

(a) More "how-to-win" strategy and tactics articles. These always rate high (and they're a personal favorite of mine!) — but we don't get many.

(b) More articles on *Space Opera* and *Aftermath*. These are two popular systems . . . why aren't more people writing about them? The feedback survey shows you want to *read* about them.

(c) As always, more reviews.

More Games

We have a couple of games in line for TSG. The "complete game" concept didn't rate incredibly high in the feedback — but it was high enough to keep us working. One of them is a fantasy game designed by Allen Varney, who has been semi-patiently waiting for many months, occasionally writing us pathetic little letters to see if we've forgotten him. Yes, Allen, we have. (Allen has also sent us

some ideas for an ad campaign so distressing that we just might try it.) Anyway, what Allen has come up with is a game of wizardly combat . . . but it isn't like any of the piles of magic-battle games of the market now. It's peculiar, and playable.

The second TSG possibility is something I came up with very late one night. I won't give you too many details now (they might change) except to say that it is a multi-player game; it will probably annoy the capital-E Ecologists, but the rest of you will like it; and it is very, very silly. (The last draft had *one* rule that seemed realistic. We took it out.)

WTWIIIG

Which translates "Where *the whole industry* is going." That's anybody's guess — but it's become sort of traditional for this column to include an occasional wild guess about The Future Of Wargaming. The sheer mass of news, gossip, press releases, and (occasionally) games that come across my desk undoubtedly represents enough raw data to allow utterly precise predictions about the next five years — if I were just clever enough. But until I can afford an extra 32K of RAM for my cerebellum, I may just have to remain fallible.

Anyway, it appears that the dreaded "crunch" is coming. Gaming's pundits have been predicting a "shake-out" of the weaker companies for some time . . . but the field defied expectations by continuing to grow and spawn more marginal operations. I'm afraid that may be about over. The economy is catching up with us: some distributors are having slow-pay problems with their customers, which means that publishers' cash flows get

weaker. And *that* is what sends a marginal company to the wall. A drop in mail-order sales can hurt you — but several thousand dollars in distributor receivables, representing games you shipped *months* ago and haven't been paid for *at all* — that can kill you. And it may, indeed, kill some of the smaller companies and even one of the "majors." But the industry as a whole will survive. A case-by-case look at the industry, assembled from rumor, hearsay, and whatever hard facts I can pick up:

TSR. The Gygax empire is doing just fine; it is now so far ahead of the rest of the adventure-gaming pack that it's not even funny. TSR is diversifying into the crafts field and setting up overseas branches. Paradoxically, it may become less and less of a direct influence on the adventure (war) games market; the TSR strategy is to go for the "mass market," with games that are simpler than anything in the regular wargaming hobby. But TSR is here to stay — and a "mass market" wargame can still be good beer & pretzels fun.

Avalon Hill. AH, long the top dog among gaming companies, is still the spiritual leader of the over-20 set. By this I mean that, though it doesn't have D&D, it does turn out a few good, solid titles every year, and I expect it will continue to do so indefinitely; its market position is secure. AH was the first of the major game companies to go into computer games. Its first offerings, though playable, were a couple of years behind the state of the art even when released. Some of the newer crop (i.e., *Tanktics*) actually show a good deal of innovation, though others are remarkable mostly for their packaging. But AH has made a sizeable commitment to computer games, and they're likely to get much better.

SPI. Five years ago, it would have been heresy to suggest that SPI was in trouble. Now it's common talk. Having gone through a couple of staff purges, one boardroom turnover, and a drastic weeding of its line, SPI may be able to hang in there. But don't be surprised if there are some really big changes within the year.

What caused SPI's problems? Ironically, many of the same factors that helped it grow. It was a hobbyist group first

Next Issue

Our May issue will feature a complete game scenario for CHAMPIONS;

The return of Bruce Webster as our regular computer columnist;

Designer's notes for STAR PATROL; and

The survey results which we couldn't fit into this issue.