



ISSUE 10 / AUTUMN 2011

# irregular

BLAST FROM THE PAST

## FIGHTING FANTASY

## BUILDING A THEME DECK

## PAINTING COMPETITION

NEW REGULAR FEATURE

PLUS  
NEWS  
TUTORIALS  
SHORT STORIES  
AND MUCH MORE

# VISIONS OF THE APOCALYPSE











# Contents



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## Editorial

Jason

We're back with another packed issue of Irregular, and we're now into our third year. So, what do we have planned for year three? Well, starting from this issue we will be running a regular painting competition in conjunction with Sheffield Irregulars. The competition will be tied into the magazine's theme. More details can be found on page 5.

We plan to cover more shows, more tutorials and much more gaming content in the future, but we are also looking for contributors. We need more authors and artists to produce material for Irregular. We need articles about any gaming system on the market, along with painting and scenery tutorials. Articles on gaming shows you've visited, along with photographs, will be well received, as will anyone brave enough to send us sculpting tutorials. Basically if you have an idea for an article, we'll be interested in publishing it in Irregular. Likewise with artwork for both covers and the interior.

So as we roll towards the end of the year, 2012 could be an interesting time. It is supposed to be the end of the world according to the wise old Mayans, then we have the Solar Flares at the end of 2012, while the Euro Zone could collapse sending us all in to the economic mire. Looks like a possible apocalypse ahead of us. How this will affect gaming remains to be seen - will we be concerned with getting a game in, when the world as we know it is collapsing around us? Probably - let's be honest, we're gamers, and nothing stops us from gaming....apart from zombies.....

Well, that's all folks - see you next time..

Nick

Tournaments - love them or hate them, they're a huge part of the gaming landscape. For a long time, I avoided tournaments, put off by tales of abusive army lists and unsportsmanlike conduct. Having run a couple of events myself in the mid 2000s, I was more willing to take part when my local player group started playing Warmachine, helping to organise a league as well as three Steamroller events. When I took a break from tabletop wargames to play CCGs, I found that I was playing multiple tournaments a month and enjoying it. Since migrating back to tabletop gaming over the last couple of years, I've attending the European Team Challenge at Maelstrom Games each year, and will be attending it next year as well.

By this point, some of you may be wondering why I'm blathering about tournaments in my editorial. Well, there are some big events going on next year that I want to attend, and I'll be documenting my progress in Irregular. The first of these is likely to be the Sheffield Kotei, which normally happens in the spring. The Kotei is one of two national Legend of the Five Rings CCG events held each year, and in this case is hosted by the guys from Patriot Games. This issue sees the start of my process on building a theme deck for the event.

In July 2012, as mentioned above, I'll be attending the third European Team Challenge - but with a twist. I'm mainly a Mercenary or Minions player, but I'm going back to my roots for ETC 3 - I'm breaking out the electric blue of Cygnar. Next issue will see my first report on my preparations for that event.

Finally, I'd just like to say hi to anyone reading who dropped in at IMP back in July - it was good to see a number of familiar faces, as well as some new ones. The planning is underway for IMP 2012, and I hope to be able to bring you some information in the next issue.



## Platoon Britannica Presents.....

The Weekend Workshop! A 2 day painting workshop with award winning UK painters. Places cost £60 each per person, which includes a miniature, as well as breakfast and lunch for both days. Places are limited to 16 people, so book early to avoid disappointment!

The two tutors we have teaching are Chris Octive and Scott Hockley.

Chris is known for his more European style, has recently picked up gold at Games Day Germany for Warhammer Monster and took first place at Salute in Fantasy Creature. Chris will be focusing on teaching metallics and monster flesh on a Games Workshop Beastman, Chris' students will also receive their own GW Beastman to paint at the workshop and take home.

Scott has more of a UK style and has a quite a few trophies on his shelf, included a bronze UK Demon, several wins at Salute and WAMP, including Best in Show at WAMP 2011. Scott will be focusing on human skin tones and non-metallic metal on Statuesque Miniatures' Bella the Partisan. Scott's students will also receive their own Bella to paint at the workshop and take home.

The workshop officially starts on Saturday, although the venue will be open on Friday night as we will be setting up, so if you're arriving in Liverpool on the Friday and want come down, meet up, join us for something to eat and a few drinks, you can do that, just let us know. Students will be broken up into two groups and will sit with their tutor of choice. Scott or Chris will then take you through the step by step process on how to paint your model, concentrating on their specific areas of expertise.

Towards the end of the second day we will break the workshop up a little by having a few demonstrations, this is a chance for pupils to have a chat with the tutors and get their feedback and advice on any

subjects they want, John Harrison will be demonstrating how he takes and edits pictures of his figures, and everyone will get a nice picture of their miniature emailed to them after the workshop. Scott will be doing a demonstration of how he paints faces, while Chris will be talking about colour theory and how he approaches competitions.

Items that you will need to bring with you!

- Paints
- Paint Brushes
- A Lamp (or two) with a daylight bulb
- Palette (ideally a wet palette)
- A scalpel or X-acto knife
- Fine grit sand paper/file
- Pin vice, drill bit and brass rod
- Superglue

Don't worry if you cant bring all these items or you forget some as we will have some spare or you can borrow them.

For enquiries and further information you can email me at

[TheWeekendWorkshop@gmail.com](mailto:TheWeekendWorkshop@gmail.com)

Very much appreciated!

John



# sheffield irregulars

## SI Painting Challenge

The staff at *Irregular Magazine* have teamed up with *Sheffield Irregulars* to sponsor a regular three monthly painting challenge.

Every issue we will announce a new challenge based on the theme of the magazine. You then interpret that theme and will build and paint a model, duel or diorama - basically, you're free to build and paint what ever you like as long as it fits the theme.

The theme for the first challenge will be **Winter's Eve.**

All entries are to be emailed in to us at [irregularmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:irregularmagazine@gmail.com)

All entries must include an image of the finished entry and one next to a screen of the current issue of Irregular Magazine. These pictures will need to be accompanied by a short description of how you developed your idea, built and painted the finished entry.

There will be a prize awarded to the best entry.

The results will be announced in the following issue of the magazine and on-line.

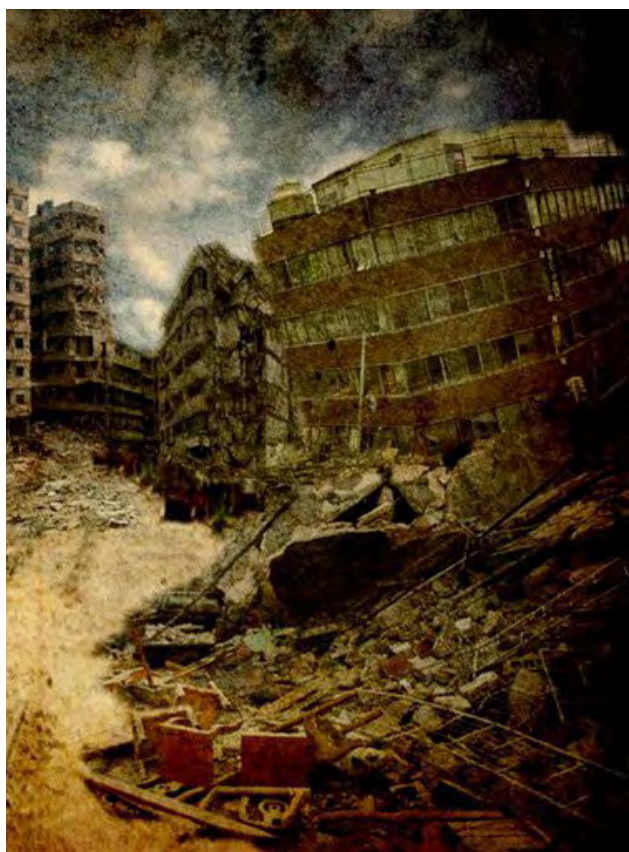






R.P.G.

## Visions of the Apocalypse



# Visions of the Apocalypse

Words: Jason Hubbard

Graphics: Jason Hubbard

Artwork: Tamás Baranya

*An Apocalypse (Greek: ποκάλυψις apokálypsis; 'lifting of the veil' or 'revelation') is a disclosure of something hidden from the majority of mankind in an era dominated by falsehood and misconception. (Wikipedia)*

Apocalyptic visions of the world ending, or the destruction of human civilisation have been with us since the dawn of time through myth and religion. Most religions have a creation and apocalypse myth. Whether it's the Norse Ragnarok or the Christian End of Days, there is some form of apocalyptic future vision where the destruction of mankind is destined.

This article won't be looking at the religious visions of the apocalypse but those that have a real possibility to us in our contemporary society, such as climate change, pandemics and the solar flares expected in 2012. We will also look back through history at events that had catastrophic and apocalyptic effects on past societies and environment.

Moments in history, such as the Black Death in the 14th century, changed society and had such an impact that the apocalypse became a possibility. So why look at the past and possible future events? The reason is that these could form one of the building blocks for an RPG or wargame campaign you may be planning or currently running. This could be a theme that holds the campaign together or is just another background element that can be used to spice things up every now and again.



*The past offers us a rich database from which we can learn, in order that we may keep on succeeding. Jared Diamond*

## Pandemics

This could be a disease that starts localised (endemic) and goes pandemic as the campaign progresses. There have been several periods in history where a pandemic has catastrophic effects on the human population. One of the most famous and well-known is the Black Death that killed millions of people in Medieval Europe; society was devastated both rich and poor were affected. A scenario such as a violent disease like the plague could potentially wipe out a vast proportion of the human population.



In 1348-1349 the disease commonly known as the Black Death appeared on the shores of Britain. This took a death toll of nearly 1/3 of the population, approximately 1.75 million people of all ages and backgrounds. Lesser outbreaks occurred in the aftermath of the initial disease and by 1400 the population was only about 2.5-3 million. The plague didn't die away quickly, it didn't vanish completely until around 1480s. The population during this period were demoralised and whittled down over a number of years, leaving villages deserted right across the country.

Recent potential pandemics have been Swine Flu and Bird flu. These recent outbreaks didn't have the same devastation as the Black Death. Though what Swine Flu did show was how quickly a disease can go pandemic in our globalised society. People have the ability to travel from country to country very easily and quickly through modern air travel. An infected person can potentially spread the disease several hundred or even thousands of miles before the symptoms start to show themselves.

### Climate Change

There have been several periods in history, where events have been shaped by severe changes in the Earth's climate. These changes have been caused by a variety of factors such as natural life cycles, volcanic eruptions, solar flares and by humans themselves. These changes in climate have caused famine, war and disease. We are currently going through a period of climatic change where the sea level could rise up to a possible 21 meters and change coastlines of countries all over the world. There is great debate over the causes of the current climatic changes. Some suggest that it is part of the planet's natural cycle, but the main consensus by many from the scientific community is that it is caused by human activity, that is green house gases.

### The Medieval Warm Period

The medieval warm period was a time of very warm climate conditions in the North Atlantic region which lasted from around 800-1300 AD. Originally researchers thought that the temperature rise was global.

Though recent study suggests that this period of warm weather and the mini ice age which followed were only seen in the Northern Hemisphere.

This period of warmer weather meant that the Arctic region was ice-free, and because of this the Vikings were able to colonise Greenland. During this period white grapes were grown in Britain for the first time.

### Little Ice Age

There was a period following the Medieval Warm period, called the little or mini ice age. There tends to be some contention as to when this started and finished. Though there is an average date of between 1600-1850.



Many believe that the mini ice age started much earlier. The ice in the Arctic region began to advance in the 13th Century along with the glaciers on Greenland. In Northern Europe from 1315 there were three years of torrential rains. From 1300 the warm weather seen in the past in Northern Europe slowed. It has been suggested that glacial expansion started around 1550 globally. This period of climate brought extremely cold winters, the glaciers advanced in the Swiss Alps destroying villages. Rivers, such as the Thames froze over during the winter. Frost fairs started in 1607. These were held on the ice and the last one was seen in 1814. In 1780 New York harbour froze which allowed people to stroll from Manhattan to Staten Island.

The Viking descendants who colonised Greenland during the Medieval Warm Period died

out in the 15th Century. They were not able to produce enough food to survive. Crop growing in Europe had to be altered to adapt to shorter, less predictable growing seasons. This led to food shortages and famine. Large tracts of land along the coasts of many Northern European countries disappeared due to flooding.

Study has suggested that decreased solar activity and an increase in volcanic eruptions around the world are the two most likely causes. Around 1850 the climate started to get warmer leading to the end of the mini ice age. Many critics of the current global warming debate suggest that today's situation is because Earth is still recovering from the mini ice age. Though most agree that the last 50 years of warming has been due to human activity.

### Economic Collapse

This is the breakdown of a national, global or local economy. It could be a sharp growth in bankruptcy and unemployment such as the depression of the 1930s. It can be followed by years of depression, social chaos and civil unrest. Some experts are suggesting that the recent breakdown in the economy around 2007/8 is the start of a complete collapse of the global economy. Currently we are seeing the Euro zone facing some of its worse days since its inception, with countries like Greece, Ireland, Spain and Italy facing bankruptcy. There aren't many cases of economic collapse in recent history, however in most of these cases the economies eventually make a slow recovery. Interestingly, the advent of crisis has been traced to imbalances in financial systems which broke down and paralysed the real economy. Only after removing bad debts and driving asset prices to all-time lows with employment levels and wages severely devastated, have these economies begun the painful and lengthy process of recovery.

What we are currently facing is a global meltdown that could have a devastating effect on society for many years to come. A crisis that could throw us into another depression.

### Nuclear Holocaust

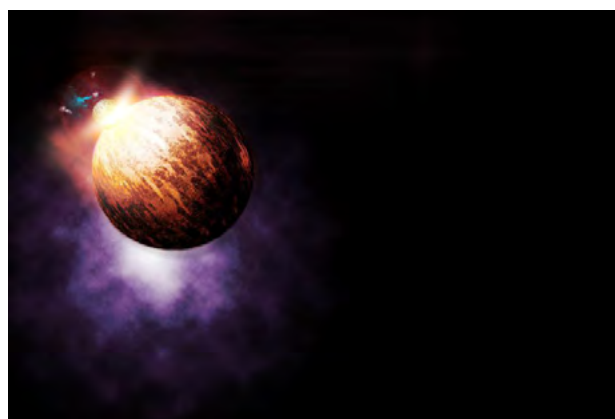
This potential apocalyptic vision has been with us since the atom bomb was first dropped on Hiroshima in Japan. There was a very real crisis during the 1960s with the Cuban Missile Crisis. There have been several films set in a post-nuclear apocalyptic world such as Mad Max. Society as we know it has disappeared and people survive through

violence and hardship. Fuel and water become the currency of the future worth more than gold and gems.

### Solar Flares

The sun goes through a period of regularly producing solar flares. NASA has predicted that towards the end of 2012 there will be a period of sunspot activity producing solar flares that could potentially have devastating effects on the planet. Solar flares have the potential to produce an EMP (Electromagnetic Pulse) that could knock out all, or most, of the planet's electronics and electricity. A similar scenario can be achieved in a nuclear attack. We're totally dependant on the use of electronics. If such an event occurred, we wouldn't be able to access our computers, radio or TV for information regarding what was happening or receive instructions from the government on what to do. Transport would be knocked out preventing food distribution. The majority of houses are dependant on electricity for light and heat. We would essentially be sent back to the 18th century.

Chaos would ensue as the population, who are dependant on food distribution, clean water and energy for light and heat, would be forced to loot to survive and civil unrest would soon become a realistic likelihood. The riots seen in the UK recently would be widespread, but with communications down, police, local and national government would be hard-pushed to stay in control of the situation.



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The same scenario could occur with the loss of oil. This would also be a problem in an EMP as without electricity oil production would grind to a halt. No more fuel for transport, no plastic, chemicals or medicine.

### Resource Depletion

Over the last few decades it's become apparent that we as a globalised community are slowly running out of a variety of resources, that include oil, gas, metals and water. The current spate of wars in the Middle East have been referred to as resource wars i.e. wars specifically aimed at taking control of a country's or region's valuable resources. Of most concern is the depletion of oil. This is because we are utterly dependant on the substance. Not only does it power our transportation, heat our homes, cook our food, it is also a vital ingredient in plastics, chemicals, fertilisers and the pharmaceutical industry, along with many other products. The loss of oil would throw us back to pre-industrialised society, and possibly a medieval period.

Without oil, manufacturing would shut down. Replacement parts would have to be made by hand and in some cases wouldn't exist.

Certain items would become very expensive, alternative energy would have to be used to generate electricity and power what equipment was still usable.

These are some of the current possible visions of apocalyptic future that could be used within a campaign. The idea of a Mad Max type of society or a 1984 future where the government has become a dictatorship (as in the film *V for Vendetta*) could make an RPG game quite intriguing and require some clever thinking by the players. Hopefully some of these will inspire you out there to really drop your players in at the deep end with an apocalyptic vision.

# SHORT STORY

## The First Day of the Last Day of the First Day





# The First Day of the Last Day of the First Day

Words: Taylor Holloway

Image: David North

David Valerian opened his eyes and felt as though it was the first time in a very long time. He was in his bed, in his old bedroom.

It was impossible.

Sitting up, he saw that he was wearing a pair of wrinkled pyjama pants and nothing else. The sun blasted in through his windows causing him to cover his eyes as he swung one leg out of bed, then the other. Standing up, he ran a hand through his sandy blond hair and coughed twice. He felt as though he had smoked an entire pack of cigarettes the night before.

Cursing old habits, he reached onto his nightstand and grabbed a smoke out of a half-empty pack and felt around for a lighter.

"No. That's not quite right. I haven't smoked in two years" he muttered to no one in particular. Plucking the cigarette from his mouth, he put it back into the pack and threw the rest of the cigarettes into the garbage. "There are no cigarettes left."

Almost in a daze, he left the bedroom into the hallway of his apartment and turned left into his living room. More sunlight spilled in through the windows here causing the white-washed walls to glow. Squinting, he stepped onto the warm hardwood and stopped. Sitting on his couch was a woman

dressed in a white and yellow shirt, black panties, and high yellow boots.

"Don't worry, David. I'm not here to hurt you." His vision swam for a moment. The woman flickered briefly and left in her place was a small grey figure with a large head and deep black eyes. He thought briefly it was his friend and advisor, Charlie, but something about the face wasn't right.

"Charlie?"

The woman shook her head. "No. I'm a figment of your imagination."

David blinked. "I don't follow. What the hell is exactly going on here?"

"I am a figment of your imagination. You are actually in The Nether, travelling on a Kraul spacecraft. More precisely, you are travelling to The Intergalactic Council's space station. This is just your mind trying to make sense of what is going on."

"It's not doing a very good job" snorted David as he started his way towards the kitchen. If this was happening, then it was damn well going to happen with a cup of coffee.

"Rarely do dreams make sense" the figment countered.

David was surprised to find that the pot of coffee was already full. He wasn't surprised to find another half-full pack of cigarettes sitting on the counter as well. Sighing, he put one to his lips and lit it off the burner of the gas stove. Taking a deep breath, he felt the smoke waft into his lungs and the nicotine buzz tingle in his forehead. If this was a dream, he was going to enjoy it.

"I kinda thought something was off here. Here I am, in my apartment and I know I watched the Kraul blow up Earth. I wasn't imagining that, was I?"

The woman smiled kindly. She was wearing some sort of half-helmet with a tinted visor. Out of the top of it were wires that connected to the ceiling over the couch, though they stretched entirely across the living room and into the kitchen.

"No. You didn't imagine that. In their defence, they felt as though they had no choice. The Others had begun seeding the planet. It wouldn't be long before you humans, and the nosii were overrun."

David nodded. "Yeah... I remember that part. I did fight zombies for two years, and worse. It's not like you can just forget about that. I shot my girlfriend when she turned. That kind of sticks with you."

The woman reached over and touched his arm and David almost dropped his cup of coffee. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be," David shrugged. "It's not your fault."

"I guess you know what you have to do now."

David took a deep draught from his warm cup. "You know, I never asked to be King. I didn't want to lead humanity into the stars. If you ask me, I'm just a man."

"You are more than that, David. You are the future of mankind. Without you, the remaining humans never would have rallied at Petawawa, and they would never have been able to strike back at the Others so effectively. Without you, the nosii and the humans probably would have been too busy fighting one another to unite and the Others would have had an easy time wiping you out."

"You make it sound like I'm some sort of messiah." David tapped the ashes off his cigarette into the stainless steel sink. "I just did what I had to do."



The woman ignored him. "It is you that will lead humanity into the future. You are their future David."

David closed his eyes. He remembered the day the apocalypse happened, and when the dead began to attack the living. The first invasion of the Others. The first time he met Charlie, and the other nosii refugees. The Earth exploding while he stood by on a kraul spacecraft and watched.

"What do I do now? Everything I've known is now destroyed. Everything everyone has known has been destroyed!" He opened his eyes. Though they raged, the woman kept her calm.

"Not everything is destroyed David. You have saved hundreds of thousands of your people and they were not the only ones. Among them are the smart, the talented and the dedicated. Among them, they brought the things they cared about - music, art, pieces of technology. When you arrive at your destination, you must collect all of it and document it. Humanity will survive."



He looked down and stared at the half-full cup of coffee. David knew it wasn't real, but it still tasted perfect - like the first cup on a day where nothing is going according to plan. He sighed, and looked back up at the woman.

"You're right. I'm sorry for losing my temper." He smirked, "It's been a long day."

"Don't apologise to me. I'm just a figment of your imagination, remember?" The woman took two steps forward and put a hand on his shoulder.

"Things won't be easy. When you leave The Nether, the fleet you are with is going to be attacked by the Ryunosa, a race of cruel and jealous creatures. There will be many casualties, but you will not be among them. It will seem as though some of your closest friends have been killed, but do not lose hope. You will be reunited with them again."

"What? Wait... What are you talking about now?"

The figure flicked again, and for a moment she appeared again as a nosii, then she was gone.

"Wait! You can't leave me alone!!"

There was silence. The room began to swim again and darkness began to roll within the corners of his kitchen, and then slowly filled his vision.

\*\*\*\*\*

"King David?"

A familiar face hovered above him. It was grey, with rough, almost scaly skin. Two large black almond shaped eyes looked at him with concern.

"Charlie?"

"We've left The Nether Sir. In a few moments, we will exit Netherspace and enter the T'Kaun system. Soon we will arrive at the Intergalactic Council Headquarters. Did you have a dream? That sometimes happens when you pass through." He paused and looked around, "Sometimes the dreams come through as well."

David sat up with a start. "Charlie, tell the Kraul commanders to arm their ships. We're going in hot!"

"My King?!" Charlie took a step backwards. "What are you talking about?"

"I'll explain later."

The nosii hesitated. He seemed to be thinking things over, before moving towards the intercom.

"Are you sure my lord?"

"I've never been more sure of anything in my life. We are going to be attacked, but by God, we are going to enter this brave new world with our guns blazing."

Charlie seemed to smirk. "Your will is my command, Sir."

"Oh, and Charlie..." David started as the nosii reached forward to activate the intercom.

"Yes, my King?"

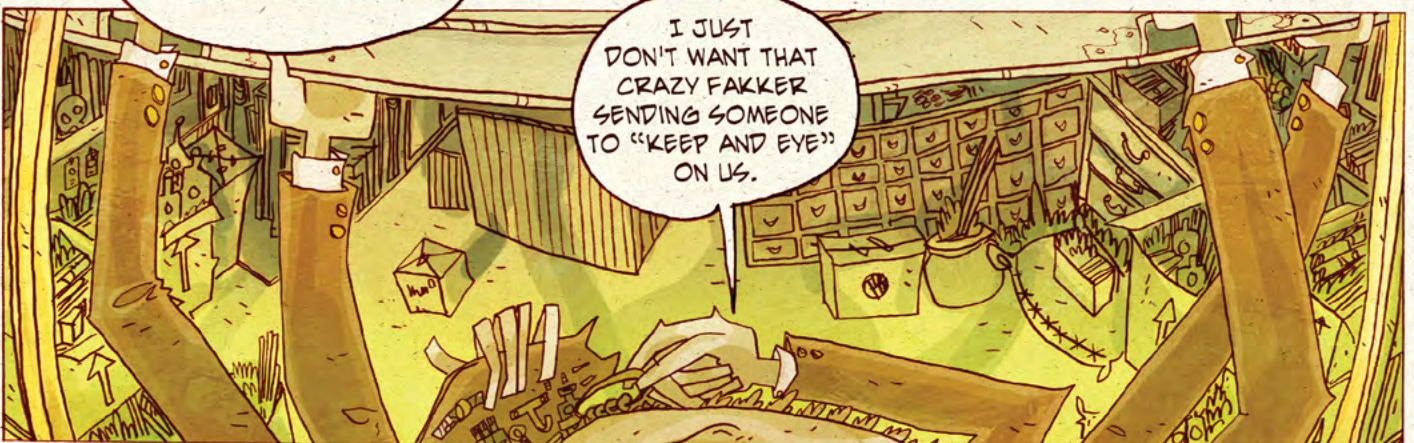
David stood up and took and put a hand on his shoulder.

"Don't worry. Everything is going to be alright."

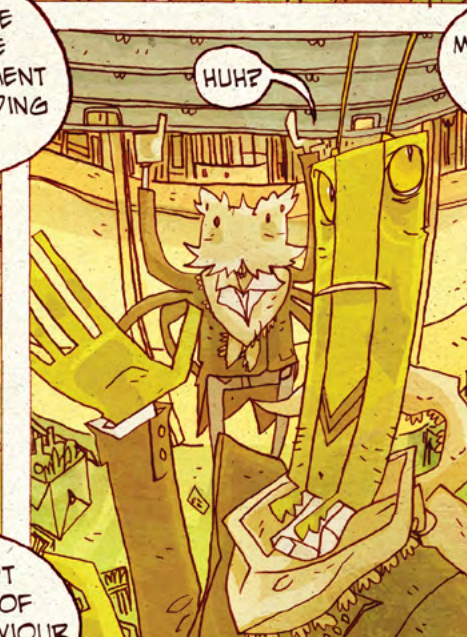














# Community

IMP 2011

Artist's Showcase  
David North

A Means to an End

Building a Theme Deck





Words &amp; Images: David North

### How did you get interested in Illustration?

I'm not really sure when I did really. I have been drawing my whole life and I went straight into doing illustration even before I finished high school. It just felt like the right path to take.

What are the most important parts of any image?

I think the most important part of an illustration is the feeling. You want the image to tell a story. It doesn't matter how well an illustration is painted, if it has no feeling or dynamics to it than it's not a very effective piece.

### What methods do you use in your work?

When doing an illustration, I first try to imagine my subject matter, and then I try to figure out its story. What lead it to the moment I am about to draw or paint, and how should the atmosphere of the piece feel because of the previous events? Once I have a story in my head and I have a good feel for the image, I like to sketch it out on my Wacom tablet with Autodesk Sketchbook Pro. After I have a good sketch down, I use different layers using Corel Painter to paint over my sketch. I often make changes to the image as I paint because once you begin to see the image and the story come to life in front of you, it continues to evolve and you have to adjust to this so that you represent the idea perfectly.

### What size/scale do you prefer to work at?

I don't really prefer any size. Larger sizes have major advantages for pieces I do for work, while smaller sizes are easier to just sketch away and have fun with.





Tell us about the character on the cover of issue 9

I had this story in my head when I came up with the idea for that cover. The story involves a man who lived a poor life in a small village with his daughter. She became very sick and ended up dying. The old man couldn't take losing her and decided he would do whatever it took to get her back.

He heard of a dark magic known as Necromancy, a magic that could bring back the dead. The old man decided to give up everything to pursue this dark art, so he traveled the world for several years attempting to master it.

The cover is the moment that he returns to his daughter's grave in order to use his new powers in order to bring her back, but when he sees her, he will realize that he can bring back her body, but never her soul, as Death's grip cannot be loosened by any mortal.



Who and what influences you and your work?

Artists that are better than me are a huge influence. Seeing what they can accomplish makes me want to be on their level. This always gives me the ambition to push myself and increase my skill level.

Do you have a preferred genre - fantasy/historical etc?

I love doing concepts for fantasy and sci-fi projects. They aren't nearly as restricted as other genres, so you can use your imagination more to create something new and interesting. It's just more fun to create a new world than it is to just record events of one that already exists.

Are you a gamer?

Yeah, I've been a pretty big gamer ever since I was young. My friends and I use to come up with rules for games using our action figures in a style that is very similar to the strategy games that actually exist. Soon we got into card games, and now we are looking into playing some role playing games and new strategy games. And of course, through out my entire life I have always played video games.







### Is there anyone you would like to work with/for in the future?

There are quite a few, the big one being Arena Net. Their art team is the best in the industry and it would be great to have a chance to work with them. I also like some of the philosophies of how concept art is done with High Voltage Software. I would also like to continue working for my current clients in the future, as I have gained a great relationship with them that allows us to bring the best out of each other, and then pushing ourselves to become better.

### Which artists do you find exciting at the moment?

Daniel Dociu has this awesome style that I never get tired of seeing. Kekai Kotaki also is an artist I follow a lot. He just has these crazy character ideas in his head that are just exciting to look at. I also have always enjoyed RK post and how he uses a dark style to give his paintings a story telling element. I would also have to say Greg Capullo is an artist I think everyone should look into. I can't wait to see what he does with Batman.





## IMP 2011

Words and photos: Jason Hubbard

This year we moved IMP from Patriot Games to a new venue, the Workstation, which is bigger and could therefore accommodate a larger show. As a result we decided to add traders and participation games to the mix, along with seminars with leading members of the gaming industry, including Alesio Cavatore, Andy from Heresy Miniatures and Kev White of Hasslefree fame, along with Chris from Fireball 6D6 and the designers of the Polemos rules sets.

The organisation of the event had been fraught with difficulties, which included committee members leaving, and myself having to move to foreign parts weeks before the show - well, the Welsh do speak another language. We'd had less than 12 months in which pull this show together, though luckily enough we had extra help and sponsorship from Patriot Games and the guys at Baccus. In the last couple of months everything started to fall into place, and we had the makings of a good show, with some spectacular 6mm games coming to the show.

Sunday morning arrived, and a wake up call at 5.30am meant I looked like a Zombie from the Walking Dead (Ed - *No change there, then.*) I arrived at the venue with Rob, who definitely had Zombie look going on, though that may have been his usual morning look for all I know. Soon the traders and participation games were on site and setting up. The all-important bacon sandwiches arrived and were demolished in time for the doors to open to the arriving punters.

The weather was being typically British - yeah, you guessed it, it was raining, or as I like to say peeing it down - so the punters were slow to arrive, but this was probably due to the weather and that good old-fashioned British past-time, which can generate a blistering hangover the following morning, though it requires you to consume copious amounts of booze the night before.

Soon the punters were pouring in through the doors. The painting competition started getting some excellent entries being handed in, some of which would be worthy of a demon at another well known wargames show (Ed - I didn't know Derby World Wargames had a painting competition...)







The show boasted a good range of gaming experiences from 6 and 28mm war gaming, RPG from 6D6 Fireball and D&D Encounters from Wizards of the Coast, along with several D&D board games. The only seminar I managed to get along to was the one presented by Andy and Kev, who were discussing the fine art of running a miniature company. This was extremely interesting and an eye-opener on the whole metal, resin and plastic production debate. They talked about the rising cost of metal and how that has affected the business, and explained why some companies were moving into resin production. I also have to say the guys worked well as a double act, the seminar was very informative and entertaining.

As we headed to the close of play, we came to the painting competition results. With some very cool pieces, the single figure category was dominated by the lads from Platoon Britannica, with Paul taking 1st in the category and overall best in show. With that, the show came to an end, and we were very pleased with the overall result. I'd like to thank everyone for being involved to making IMP a good show, and all I have to say is see you all next year at IMP 2012.

*Ed - We hope to bring you news about IMP 2012 in the next issue.*



# Building a Theme Deck

Words and photos: Nick Johnson  
Artwork: Jason Hubbard & Golden Black

The Legend of the Five Rings (L5R) collectible card game (CCG) has always had a strong background setting, and has always encouraged making use of this background when building a deck. In recent years this has seen the rise of the Theme deck as a specific award during the Kotei season, which is the period of time during which the player base takes part in a series of national events, which have had wide-reaching effects of the setting of the game.

For those of you who haven't encountered L5R before, the setting has a very strong Eastern theme. Some would just say Japanese, but there are elements of other Eastern cultures in there as well. It is a land with a strict hierarchy, where the Emperor is a god made flesh and the samurai class rule over the peasants. The people of Rokugan - the land within L5R - are divided into nine Great Clans, several Minor Clans and a few Imperial families. Each clan has its own distinct flavour inherited from its founding Kami - one of the children of the original Lord Moon and Lady Sun. The Great Clans spend their time plotting and warring against each other, occasionally uniting to deal with threats which could destroy the entire Empire.

I've been a player of the Dragon Clan since I started playing L5R, going back to my first roleplaying session within the game. I played the CCG solidly during the Lotus and Samurai arcs, but took a break during the most recent arc, Celestial. With the next edition - Emperor Edition - due to launch in

September 2011, I've decided to get involved with the game again.

I've never been an overly competitive player even when I have played in the Koteis. For me the events have always been about meeting new people and seeing how these new opponents play their decks differently to my local player group. I've made a few good friends while playing L5R. Even though I haven't been playing, I've been able to keep in touch with them via the internet and through helping at the two Koteis which have been run in Sheffield.

As I don't expect any deck I run to make the cut, let alone win the event, I've decided to take a shot at a title I think I can win - that of Best Theme Deck. I'm planning on running this deck at the Sheffield Kotei in 2012 and possibly at a couple of others if I can get to them. Dragon decks strike me as particularly good as a base for a theme deck as we tend to get a wide range of keywords across our personalities. This means we can access most of the normal victory conditions, if not all of them.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with L5R, you can win by a Military victory (taking their provinces), an Honour victory (achieving 40 or more Honour), causing your opponent to be dishonoured out of the game (reducing them to -20 Honour or below) or by becoming Enlightened (getting all of the Five Rings in play via their own specific requirements). There may be events which give other alternate victory





conditions as well depending on the edition of the game you are playing.

### Selecting a theme

From the theme deck entries I've seen in the last couple of years – and the one I entered in my last Sheffield Kotei – there are three main approaches you can take when building a theme deck. Firstly, you can look to the existing background and try to base your deck on an event that has happened in the fiction. L5R players are lucky in that they receive weekly stories from the appropriately named Story Team, led by Shaun Carman. This gives an excellent resource to work from and is generally an enjoyable read on a Friday.

Secondly, you can choose a specific mechanic or interaction and use that for your base. One example of this that I saw was a deck for the Spider Clan. This used as many cards as possible allowing it to create Zombie token personalities eventually burying the opponent under a mountain of the walking dead. I've seen similar decks before which have had custom tokens created with different zombie artwork, either for zombies from different clans or to use iconic zombie imagery from films.

The third approach I've seen is to take an influence from outside the game world and use that as a focal point running cards that fit with it. A good example of this was one run by Steve Chamberlain at the 2011 Aldershot Kotei. He built a Dragon deck using a variety of the Monk personalities out of the Pillars of Virtue stronghold. This sounds like a fairly standard Dragon deck until you realise that he'd replaced the personalities with wrestlers from the WWE...

I've decided to take the third approach when building my deck. I'm going to build my deck around one of my favourite television shows. Those who know me know that I'm a big fan of the American crime show, whether it be Numb3rs, Bones or one of the flavours of CSI. However, my favourite at the moment has to be NCIS. It has a great blend of action, humour and character development, and the crime-solving bits aren't bad either.

How do I turn a television show into a deck for L5R, then? Well, NCIS is a cop show which leads me to look at the Magistrates – the Rokugan equivalent of the police. The Dragon clan has an entire family of magistrates – the Kitsuki. Several other clans have their own magistrates as well which should give me a wide base of personalities to choose from. Before I can pick individual characters, I need to consider what I would need available to fit with the roles on the show:

- Three male Kitsuki Magistrates, to represent Gibbs, Di Nozzo and McGee
- One female Kitsuki Magistrate, to represent Caitlin Todd
- A female Scorpion Magistrate, preferably with Ninja, to represent Ziva David
- A female Tamori or Agasha Alchemist and/or Earth shugenja, to represent Abby Sciuto, the forensic scientist
- One or two male Kuni shugenja, to represent Ducky Mallard and Jimmy Palmer

It is likely that I wouldn't run too many copies of the shugenja as they'd dilute the deck too much. Plus,



unless an episode is focused on them, they tend to only show up in certain key scenes. By diluting the deck, I mean that they are unlikely to feature the keywords that the majority of the deck will run off – namely **Magistrate**, **Samurai** and, depending on what personalities are released, **Courtier**.

While this covers the majority of the protagonists, there are some other slots I need to fill in the personality base if I want to replicate the usual structure of an NCIS episode. Firstly, I need the Wrongfully Accused, as there is normally at least one person who crops up during the course of the investigation. I will need a Victim. As murder plots are the most common, this will unfortunately mean someone doesn't survive the opening scene. Finally, I will need one or more Villains, as every crime story has an antagonist in the background.

Unfortunately, while I know what roles I need to fill, at this point there isn't much of a card pool for me to select from. At the time of writing, I only know the cards available in the first two sets of Emperor Edition - Before the Dawn and Forgotten Legacy so I can't fill too many of these roles just yet. Having said that, I've found candidates for a few of the roles...

For the Wrongfully Accused, I'm looking at **Mirumoto Yozo**. More specifically, his **Experienced** version, who was released in Before the Dawn. He's **Unique** so will only use up one slot in the deck, and his reputation as a very angry samurai will help him fulfil his role. His ability will also be very useful – the ability to destroy Followers or unequipped Personalities without using a card in your hand is very powerful.

The same set provides me with candidates for my female Kitsuki and my Villain, in the forms of **Kitsuki Fujimura** and **Asako Izuna** respectively. As a Villain, literally, Izuna will be very useful for this deck by dint of having the **Magistrate** keyword, as it helps with my consistency of that keyword. Keyword consistency is important, as it means you can run cards that look for a specific keyword, such as Magistrate, without worrying that you'll be stuck with personalities in play who are not eligible to use the card. His ability to dishonour an enemy personality as he comes into play will also be very handy. Kitsuki Fujimura's ability, for instance, requires a dishonourable target.

Forgotten Legacy has given me one of the male Kitsuki I'll need, with **Kitsuki Nubane**. He's got exceptional numbers for his cost, a great selection of keywords, and a useful ability. Quite who he'll represent, I'm not sure but I'm currently thinking DiNozzo.

I'm hoping that by next issue at least one more set will have been released, if not the Emperor Edition base set as well. If so, I should be in a better position to look at sorting out a deck list. However, there are still things that I can be working on in the meantime.

### Supporting your theme

Building your deck to a theme is generally not going to be enough to get you the Best Theme prize on its own. At the very least, judges are likely to expect a document explaining the theme possibly with a story as well. If I were building this deck with a month to go to the Kotei, that's probably all I'd do for my entry. The advantage of planning this so far ahead, of course, is that I can do more than the average work on my support elements.





I've done a bit of brainstorming about what I could produce to support my theme deck as thoroughly as possible, and here are the ideas I've got thus far:

- A piece of fiction, structured like an episode of NCIS, with each section framed with black and white versions of cards involved introduced in that section. I'll try to use the names of each card title in the story, using **bold** text to highlight the first reference to each
- A 'cast list', explaining who each personality is meant to represent
- Rather than using the usual coloured sleeves, get some custom deck backers printed out – one will probably use a logo for NCIS: Rokugan, while the other might be an artwork compilation
- A custom playmat, featuring the aforementioned NCIS: Rokugan logo
- If I can get hold of Flying Tricycle, a company which have produced honour counters and strongholds in the past, then a custom honour counter top plate would be an option
- Using Magic Set Editor 2 (MSE2) and the fan-made L5R card templates, I intend to produce my own NCIS: Rokugan set for L5R. This would need to use screen-shots from the show to illustrate the cards, and would ideally be a full 156-card set

Some of these ideas involve more work for me than others. The fiction and set, for instance, will take a lot of work to do, while the deck backers, playmat and honour counter generally rely on someone else doing the work.

Well, that's it for part one. In the next issue I'll be taking a look in a bit more detail at the deck itself and how I expect it to run, along with giving some progress reports on my theme deck's extra elements. Issue 12 should see the finalised deck list, some playtest reports and finished versions of some of the kit. Assuming the Sheffield Kotei is in April again this year, issue 13 should see my report of the event itself.

**Utz! BANZAI!**

# Blast From the Past

## Fighting Fantasy Books

Words and photos: Dave Barker

The first fantasy games that I remember playing as a kid were the Fighting Fantasy books from those notable luminaries of the industry, Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone. Most of the ones I owned (hell, still do own!) had that distinctive green spine - although the specific colour of green varied across the titles as each book seemed to fade at its own rate.

I spent hours and hours with nothing more than a piece of paper, a pencil, a pair of six-sided dice and one of these books, trying to win in one of the many different ways that each book allows. I am an avid reader (my Mum actually calls me a compulsive reader) and at 10 years old, the relatively simple idea that one book didn't need to be a linear experience but could be re-read and the story turn out a

different way each time was something that really wormed its way into me. It showed me that reading could be an interactive experience, an exciting experience and on occasions (like when you're killed by a stupid goblin!) a frustrating experience.

If you're not familiar with the format of these titles, the book is written as a series of non-linear sections and at the end of each you are directed to the next section to read based on different factors. Sometimes you get to choose an action to take, in other sections your progress is decided by a lucky roll of the dice, or perhaps on how you fare when you have to fight one or more monsters.





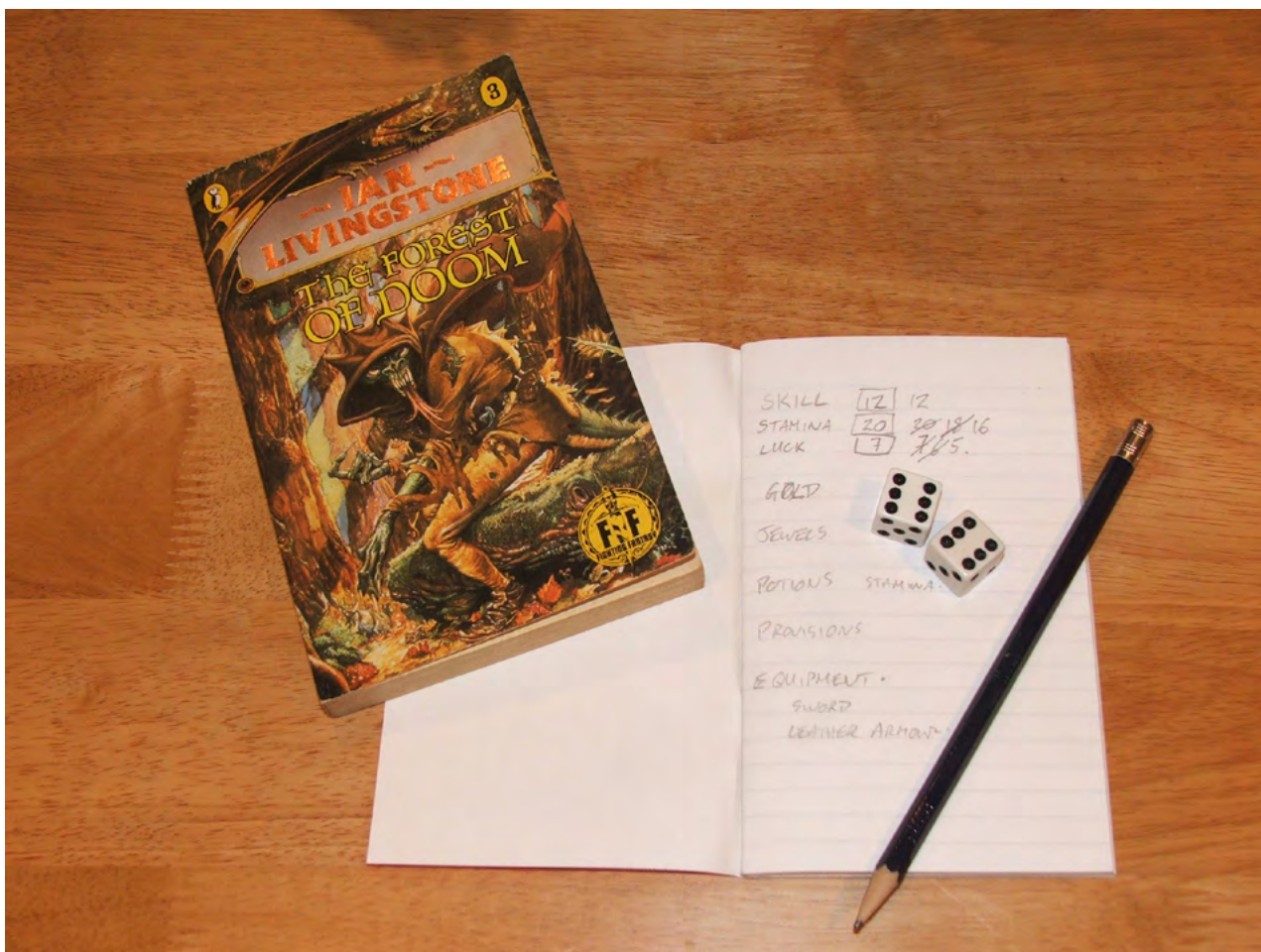
There are other books that are similar to these. I remember as an even younger child having books from a series called Choose Your Own Adventure which were formatted in a very similar way. However, the paths through these books were more like a web to be navigated. They were much less dynamic and less appealing to keep re-reading than the Fighting Fantasy books. I believe that this is because before you start reading a Fighting Fantasy book you are directed to create a new 'character' based on a series of dice rolls. This means that you inevitably put a little of yourself into each character you create and, in a more profound way, you enter the story of a Fighting Fantasy book more deeply than you ever could with a Choose Your Own Adventure book. Your character's varying skill and other abilities mean that a different story can unfold, even from the same choices, though your fate might ultimately be the same.

Of course, those of you reading this who are familiar with role-playing games will already have spotted a lot of familiar terminology. When I discovered 'proper' role-playing games, I was already a good way down the path of understanding what such games involve and how they work. So my friends (who read

Fighting Fantasy books as well) and I dived eagerly into this new hobby that we still play to this day. And we have a lot to thank Fighting Fantasy books for - helping us find and get started with the hobby of role-playing!

A couple of years later when we were playing a lot more role-playing games and even starting to experiment with wargames, you can imagine how delighted we were to discover that there was actually a Fighting Fantasy RPG! Not just books, but a set of rules that allowed you to play your own Fighting Fantasy games just like we had been doing with Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay, Advanced Dungeons and Dragons, Palladium and ICE's MERP and Rolemaster. In fact, I clearly remember as a group turning our back on what felt like the vast table-driven complexity of some of these games to revel in the simplicity of Fighting Fantasy with its three basic statistics and easy to write adventures.

Naturally, we returned again to those more complex games in time, but we still played Fighting Fantasy occasionally. Advanced Fighting Fantasy was a further revelation. It made it easier for us to



play slightly more complex games as it provided a number of extra rules and a workable, if slightly clunky, magic system. As an RPG it is also so simple and portable that I've played it in a number of odd locations: on the back seat on a car journey, in the pub and even on the riverbank when the trout were avoiding us even more than usual. But in the last ten years or so I let my love of Fighting Fantasy slip. I became nothing more than a collector of the books and the RPG expansions. I would see the titles on my shelf and get nostalgic: Dungeoneer, Port Blacksand, The Forest of Doom, Creature of Havoc, Out of the Pit, Deathtrap Dungeon, Titan, Citadel of Chaos, Trial of Champions. I can see them all now from where I sit as I write this.

Fast forward to earlier this year at the UK Games Expo 2011, somewhere in Birmingham with my mate. Each of us with a five year old of our own that we're inducting into the world of games. We had got most of the way around the show when we came across a stand selling a new version of Advanced Fighting Fantasy, a 2nd edition! Digging deep in my pocket, I immediately bought the core rules. I would have bought the two expansion books, Out of the Pit and Titan as well, except that I didn't have enough money at the time. I never have much money left once I've been most of the way around a show!

I wasn't sure what to expect when I bought it. The stand guy assured me that the game was faithful to the original - but I'd have probably bought a copy anyway, even if it proved to be awful. Having read through the book and tried a couple of simple encounters I'm very impressed. It really is faithful to the original game, with what looks like the expanded magic system from a different modern re-imagining of Fighting Fantasy, the Sorcery series of game books.

But the thing that I found most exciting about these rules apart from the same flavour and nostalgia of the games from my youth, is that they're simple enough for me to play a Fighting Fantasy game with my young daughters. They understand what is happening in the game, they know which dice they need to roll and what number they need to get on those dice to succeed in whatever action they're attempting. I am able to share and pass on my fond memories of Fighting Fantasy to them both as they grow up.

Do I sound like a sad old Dad? Sure. Do I care? Not a bit. I'm off now to have a look on the RPGNow

website to see if I can find some paper miniatures of fairies (my daughters like fairies at the moment) and to write an adventure for them! I hope you've enjoyed my reminiscences as much as I have and if you have similar fond memories of Fighting Fantasy, I'd recommend having a look at the Advanced Fighting Fantasy 2nd Edition rules. Or at least dig out one of the old books, a pencil, paper and two six-sided dice!







## Dindrenzi Gunship



# Dindrenzi Gunship Painting Guide

Words & Images: Alex Garbett

## Stage 1



After buying the ship through eBay and receiving it via the post I was very surprised at the cleanness of the casting. Hardly any cleaning, filing, sanding needed to be done – in fact all I used was a scalpel and the job was done.

## Stage 2



As with every resin model I gave it a quick wash in the sink with warm soapy water and dried the model carefully.



## Stage 3



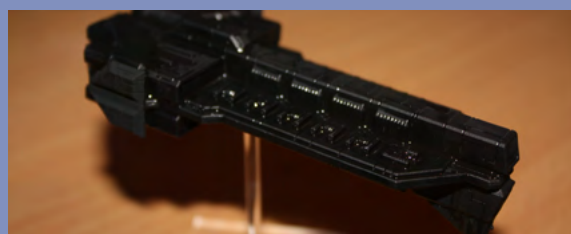
The ship was undercoated black using Humbrol Hobby Spray brought from a local model shop near to my work. I used two coats to cover the ship, spraying one side, waiting for it to dry and flipping the ship over to spray the reverse. This procedure was repeated for the second coat.

## Stage 4



Once the undercoat had dried with every model I added a third coat base coat of Chaos Black paint via brush to make sure I covered any areas missed when spraying.

## Stage 5



Having looked online at the Spartan website for colour ideas, and copying some pictures to experiment on with colours using Microsoft Paint, I settled on a primarily red and white paint scheme that I thought would both look striking and also fit the Dindrenzi mentality towards their ships and enemies.

## Stage 6



I started using Skull White and applied this to the areas I wanted a raised colour. I also used the long-out-of-production Midnight Blue to highlight the key lines.

## Stage 7



I did a second thin coat of white on the ship's main spine and on the highlights I did a thin watered down coat of Adeptus Battlegrey on top of the Midnight Blue.

## Stage 8



Now came the red for which I started with Mechrite Red as the base, taking care not to go into the black armour recesses on the main spine and wings.

## Stage 9



As the first red coat had dried I began applying more red and building up the colour again taking care not to go over into the armour plate accesses and leaving the pristine white strip. I lastly painted a thin red highlight using Blood Red to better define some of the armour plates.

## Stage 10



With the red and white complete I set to painting the Railguns. These were simply painted Adeptus Battlegrey again and then washed in Badab Black – the main intention for them to be subtle against the ship and not overpowering the red which is what I wanted people to see first.



Stage 11



Seeing as most of the painting was done at this point I decided to add a couple of just-off-white highlights to key parts to sharpen the shape a little more from being just a mass of black..

Stage 12



The engines were painted using Ice Blue and working up to a lighter central blue.

Stage 13



Finally I finished off the Dindrenzi logo on the front of the ship by adding a final white highlight and a little Badab Black in the recesses to raise it



All in all a fun, fairly quick paint job over about an hour carried over two nights. In fact I enjoyed it so much I've ordered another and a Dystopian Wars carrier ship.

# Reviews

Baccus - 6mm  
Napoleonic Russians  
OLD WEST 28mm  
LARGE BUILDING  
Tomorrow's War  
US Marines





## Baccus - 6mm Napoleonic Russians

Words: Dave Barker

Now, I know that some of you are already thinking, "6mm figures? I could never paint anything that small." In fact some of you probably won't even have read this far into this review, but lend me your ears (or eyes, I guess) for the rest of this short review and have a look at a few pictures of these miniatures online, because these figures would be great at 15mm. At 6mm they're a wonder!

It has been a year since I moved away from Sheffield and I can honestly say that one of the things that I miss the most about my home city is its great gaming scene, no small part of which is Baccus.

My last visit home coincided with an open day at Baccus HQ where I bought for myself the Russian Napoleonic starter pack to expand my own 6mm Napoleonic collection. On seeing me buy these, our editor Nick leaped into action, telling me that I was the perfect reviewer for this new line. Before I knew what was happening, I had before me a small bag of samples covering the whole range.

There are a wide selection of 6mm miniatures available of a distinctly varied quality from the downright brilliant to the "is-this-even-sculpted?"



but I'm pleased to say that these Baccus Russians are definitely at the 'excellent' end of this spectrum. In fact, looking at the figures as I write this, I can hardly believe that it is possible to pick out quite so much detail on such a tiny figure. I can see bridles picked out on horses' heads; noses and chin straps on the men and cords picked out on their shakos – even the Cossack's hats look furry.

But even despite this mass of well sculpted detail, this is not my favourite thing about these Russians. The thing I like most about them is the range of different options and types of troops that are available. Whether you want your troops in shakos or kiwers, or you want Line Infantry, Jaegers or Grenadiers; perhaps you're after cuirassiers, dragoons, hussars or even Cossacks; 6lb or 12lb artillery, or maybe even a 10lb howitzer, just about everything you could need is covered in the range. There are even different models available for the cuirassiers and dragoons, to more accurately portray pre- or post-1808 Russian forces.

Of course, there are Generals available in the range as well, which I find to be the stars of the show in terms of detail and character sculpted into the six different mounted figures. Of particular interest to anyone who has ever tried to assemble 6mm artillery with separate wheels should be that all of the artillery pieces are single-cast – which means no fiddling with tiny amounts of superglue and hopping over and over again to get them assembled and built just right – simply start painting immediately! If you've not experienced this particular modelling pain before, you can only begin to imagine the relief of seeing these one-piece casts!

Baccus sell a range of different flags that you can simply cut out and glue to the flagpoles cast on the command strips of figures. They also sell army packs, such as the one I bought for myself, and booster packs which are made up for use in their Polemos wargame system. However, each of the codes can also be bought individually if you want to put together a specific mix of troops, instead.

Of course, if 6mm miniatures put you off completely, then this range isn't going to be for you, but then you probably wouldn't have got this far into this review if you didn't have a slight interest! If nothing else I'd recommend buying the pack of Generals (code NRU30) to get a good idea of the quality of these figures. You never know – you might even find yourself painting a 6mm figure!

# Old West 28mm Large Building

SARISSA PRECISION

Words and Photos: Alex Garbett

Laser-cut MDF buildings and bases are becoming more available and present a more durable and cheaper alternative to plastic and resin.

I bought myself a building to have a deeper look into this technology and product as it was something Jason and myself had been discussing in the pub.

As you can see from the pictures below it comes nicely flat packed with full construction details and plenty of pictures to help in case you get stuck.



The kit is basically a 3D jigsaw puzzle, but is very easy to construct using a simple box stacking and teeth fit together approach.

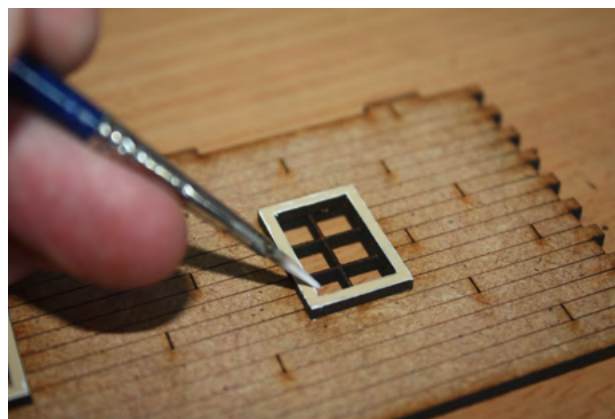
I was very impressed with the level of detail on the building though from the windows to plank lines on the walls and floors – also given that it's already a wood colour the laser burns just made it look even more realistic.

The brilliant things about this kit though are that it looks great but also very easy to store and carry and set up for games – especially when you can play inside the buildings and remove the roofs and have games and 'shootouts' on different levels.



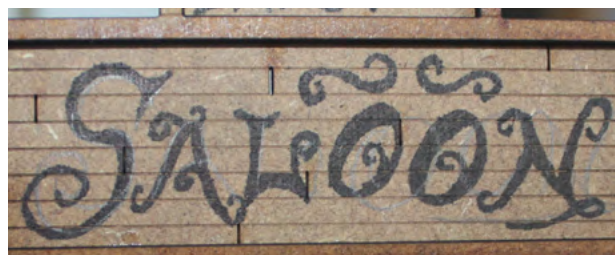
I would love to detail out the insides with a bar and stools or beds for a brothel. This kit makes for a great wargaming piece but is also useful for roleplaying as it is so accessible and easy to get into and move around.

With the above I did a little work on the outside and it was well worth it. After a little research on Google I settled on the name 'Tango Saloon' and used a black thin marker pen to print this onto the MDF. Next came the process of adding a little white to raise the detail, with some Bleached Bone on the sign and window frames followed up with Skull White around the edges.



The kit came in at just under £20 for what I feel is great value and a fantastic product.

If you're looking to order one yourself just keyword search "old west building" on eBay and see the options open to you – let your imagination run wild all over the old west.





# Tomorrow's War

Osprey Publishing

Words: Dave Barker

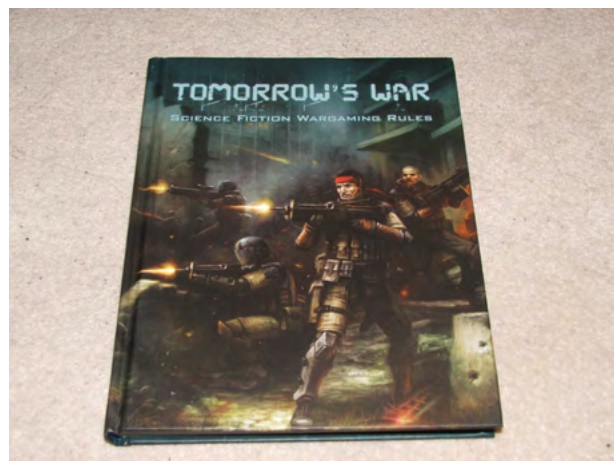
Tomorrow's War is the latest wargaming rules title available from Osprey. Like Force on Force, their modern wargaming rules which we reviewed in a previous issue of Irregular Magazine, Tomorrow's War has been created in conjunction with Ambush Alley Games and makes use of many of the same core mechanics that I've come to like a lot when playing Force on Force.

Also like its predecessor, Tomorrow's War comes as a nice solid hardback book, nearly 250 pages in length and printed in full colour throughout. Illustrations and photographs of miniatures are used extensively in the book which illustrate the content very well.

Compared to Force on Force, it shares much in terms of core mechanics, the Action-Reaction turn sequence, the 4+ universal game mechanic and force lists based around troop quality, moral and confidence level, the ability to pitch regular and irregular forces against each other, fog-of-war cards that add confusion and an occasional realistic lack of control to the tabletop and an appendix that supports running games in a campaign.

However, unlike Force on Force, Tomorrow's War is quite firmly a sci-fi title. The first thirty-or-so pages of the book are given over to an overview of a 24th century setting that can be used as a background when playing your own games of Tomorrow's War. However the flexibility of the rules and the regular blocks of information that describe why rules have been created in the way they have mean that it is pretty easy to create or adapt your own settings and forces for use in the game.

Further enhancing this science fiction nature of this game are rules that cover more traditional sci-fi fare such as jump troops, powered armour, anti-gravity and walking vehicles, robotic troops, gigantic battle vehicles and a simple mechanic that represents differing technology levels on the battlefield.



The rules are organised in a well thought out manner, punctuated by sample game scenarios that allow you consolidate the rules from the preceding sections. I was pleased to see that the temptation to simply re-create minimal variations of the same learning scenarios from the Force on Force rulebook has been avoided.

Beyond the basic rules that cover infantry and mechanised combat already mentioned, advanced rules are also available that cover close air support and off-table artillery, mounted units, advice on creating your own alien forces and rules that cover the use of advanced network and information systems, which in Tomorrow's War are termed The Grid.

One thing that I particularly noticed missing from Tomorrow's War is a quick summary sheet that pulled together all of the tables into one place for easy reference, which I always find very useful for almost any wargame.

Overall, I really like Tomorrow's War as a ruleset. If you like your games with an alternate activation sequence and special aliens with special rules, then this game probably isn't for you. But if you're looking for something different in a sci-fi wargame, something that adds a bit of reality despite being set in the future, or if like me you already like Force on Force and want a similar set of rules to play your sci-fi games, then I cannot recommend this highly enough!

Tomorrow's War, Ambush Alley Games, Osprey Publishing, ISBN 978-1-84908-531-1

# US Marines

Bolt Action/Warlord Games

Words & Photos: Alex Garbett

Having recently watched the HBO series 'The Pacific' Jason and myself were inspired to model some US Marines.

Given the above my purchase this month is from Warlord Games - the US Marine Corps metal box set.



Background:

The US Marine Corps was founded to serve as a troop contingent aboard US naval vessels and are responsible for the security of the ship, but also boarding actions and acting as a raiding/landing force.

The latter is mainly what they're most associated with in people's minds and history – the great and terrible battles in World War 2: Guadalcanal, Guam, Iwo Jima to name but a few.

Personally I'm quite familiar with WW2 history in Europe but not the Pacific theatre of war and the battles that were fought there, so it's been very interesting to learn about it all – more than anything, as in Europe, the waste of war and loss of so many lives.

The Kit:

Warlord Games' Bolt-Action range covers a huge and ever increasing selection of miniatures and armies of



the period in hard plastics, resin and metals.

At £25 the US Marine Corps box is great value, with 21 metal 28mm miniatures in a variety of poses, ranging from digging a fox hole to running with ammo boxes, throwing grenades, carrying a stretcher and - my personal favourite - a marine taking aim with shotgun.

As you'd expect from Warlord these are very well sculpted character miniatures with hardly anything in the way of mould lines or flash. 18 out of the 21 miniatures come with different head options – part of Warlord's Figure Head optional head system – and there are 20 heads to choose from. The boxed set also includes an accessories metal sprue containing Japanese swords, shovels and additional webbing so you're able to produce and model a very unique looking force ready for the battlefield.

The box contains the following:

- Command officer, radio operator, stretcher-bearer, Corpsman and casualty
- USMC Squad leader with M1 carbine, 2 NCOs with Thompson SMG's, 1 Marine with a combat Shotgun, 1 Marine with a BAR and 5 Riflemen



- Marine with a Flamethrower
- 60mm Mortar team and two man 30 Cal LMG team

#### Final thoughts

I'm very glad I bought this and haven't been as excited about a new kit for some time!



This is my first purchase from Warlord apart from a couple of their metal Roman Legionnaire blisters, so I wasn't too sure on what I was getting inside nor the quality but having cracked it open and seen all the options my imagination is racing away with ideas on making, modelling and basing ideas for these miniatures.

Overall I'm really impressed with the whole set and would definitely recommend them to anyone – the whole product is great buy!

Firstly the value of this box – 21 for £25 = £1.20 per metal model – über great value in my eyes, considering you can pay a lot more for 21 miniatures from other companies.

Secondly the options for modelling and customisation with the pack - all those heads, poses and accessories to swap and dry fit for the coolest looking US Marines possible.

Thirdly the sculpts and quality of the casting, meaning not too much time to clean so I can start modelling and painting sooner rather than later. Going to jump off now and start the process of modelling these Marines ready for battle. I'm really enthused with a desire to make more for the Pacific theatre and to accompany these models: other squads, teams, dioramas and I wouldn't mind a Sherman or two.



# Wrath of Ashardalon

Words: Will Kirkby

Photos: Jason Hubbard and Wizards of the Coast



OK, so maybe I'm not the most unbiased reviewer for this game. My eyes roll into the back of my head at the mention of the tiny plastic figure revolution in gaming that is D&D nowadays. Don't get me wrong, I know some people love it with a passion but even I, a self admitted sad sack of a gamer, worry that they may need to broaden their horizons. I like my wargames to be wargame-y and my role-playing games to remain in my head. You know, where all the good special effects are.

Still, I've played this game through a few times now and here's my two penny worth. It's good, not great but good.

What, you want more?

The game is basically a variety of dungeon crawl adventures, similar to quite a few games that have come before (the most notable of which is Warhammer Quest which has a place in my heart (Ed - Mine too)). You may be wondering what this game has to



offer you that others can't. Well you know that guy - you know the one, the one with the questionable grip on humanity, who is always thinking of ways to kill you and your friends...

You know, the GM. Well he's gone, and instead everything is managed by the rules. So everyone gets to be a hero this time (Ed - you've not met the players in our group, have you? Some couldn't be heroes if you paid them). The encounters and monsters in the dungeon are randomly generated as you play through. The characters are the pre-generated stereotypes that you'll find in the front of any fantasy RPG book next to their class description.

Now I know that you're thinking this all sounds a little bland. Well, to be honest, it is. But that's not what you're paying for with this game. You're here because you want to kick ass, kill monsters, steal their treasure, then use said treasure to kill the monsters' friends. The game play is simple and fast-paced, and mounting up a nice 'kill pile' of tiny plastic monsters next to your characters' cards leaves a warm feeling in any gamer's heart.

The scenario book allows different styles of game play and small stories to be told against the backdrop of healthy carnage. New rules are added for these adventures so that each has a unique flavour. More than that, though, these rules don't over-complicate what is already a nice simple rules set. Having said that, I did find the whole tiles and squares measuring system a little confusing, though this may be a testament to my own stupidity rather than a design flaw.

As for the product itself, well it's everything you'd expect from a Dungeons and Dragons game. The books are nicely laid out and easy to read. There is a hugely satisfying amount of pretty card tiles ranging from dungeon rooms to events, markers and more. Even the miniatures have a great old-school plastic charm. The production quality of this game is frankly great. Though with a price tag of fifty pounds on the box anything less would have left me feeling cheated.

So I should probably sum Wrath of Ashardalon up for all those of you with far too much money and far too little sense - you know.. gamers. The game itself, even with all its high production values, seems a little too vanilla. The adventures and playable characters all smack of that new generic fantasy smell that comes with players core books these days.

The game-play is simple and enjoyable, though being limited to two character levels in any D&D style game is a bit like finally getting a date with that girl from school (who everyone tells you is easy) only to be told to 'keep it above the waist'. The adventures do go some way to making it more interesting beyond the hack and slash. Though with only 13 in the book, expect some repetition if you play it regularly.

I'll say this, I enjoyed it a lot more than I was expecting and the game does show a lot of promise in its bare-bones form. I think to really enjoy most of it though you need to go homebrew. Create a couple of new characters. Write your own adventures or missions. Basically you can make this game as entertaining as you want.

Dungeons and Dragons has a great wealth of story and history and fun characters, full of warmth and humour. I just wonder why they didn't use it to make this game unique.



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