

From Task Force Games

NEXUS

#3

THE GAMING CONNECTION

U.S. \$2.50
AUST. \$3.50
U.K. £1.95

- ★ HEROES OF OLYMPUS Extension
—Land of the Pharaohs
- ★ NEW STAR FLEET SCENARIO
- ★ HIGH-TECH STARFIRE

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During the last half of the nineteenth century, there was a group of tycoons, captains of industry and philanthropists in this country which controlled the nation's railways, banks, the stockmarket, etc. They were called, by many, the "robber-barons". Their arch-typical attitude was best expressed by shipping magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt; when asked what a particular merger would do to the consumer, he replied "The public be damned!"

The Vanderbilts, Morgans and Fisks are no longer with us, but their spirit is always present. The feuds and bitter battles that marked their era are a part of human nature whenever the making of money is involved. Spawned and fueled by economic concerns, the bickering tends to take on a life of its own. The ultimate sufferers in such squabbling are the consumers.

So, how is this connected with a mere hobby? Several years ago, the primary game publishers in the business got together and formed an organization called the Game Manufacturers Association, or GAMA for short. GAMA's major contribution to the gaming world is the administration of ORIGINS, the annual convention where over 4000 gamers, publishers, designers, artists, and the like gather to play and talk shop, as well as premier new games. GAMA assumed this responsibility in 1980.

GAMA represents a concept which is rare in the competitive arena of merchandising. It's an example of real cooperation. Originally sponsored by Simulations Publications Inc. of New York, and Avalon Hill of Baltimore, the trademark and rights to ORIGINS were donated to GAMA, which effectively makes it a somewhat democratic body. This was also the point at which ORIGINS began to travel. Since GAMA has taken over the convention, it has been to San Mateo, and Baltimore. Next year it will be held in Detroit, and Dallas the following year. In other words, there's a real attempt being made to give everyone around the country a chance to get to this premier event of Adventure Gaming.

As is the case with most joint ventures, the road has not always been smooth. The biggest jolt was the withdrawal of Tactical Studies Rules of Lake Geneva from GAMA and from all participation in

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NEXUS

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ORIGINS; TSR chose to expend all their energy on their own GENCON conventions. This was followed by a ban on any event featuring any TSR game at ORIGINS, and a further warning against the sale of any TSR products at the convention. Once again, you might ask, so what? If TSR wants to ignore the gamers, and deny itself a market, that's their own business.

Well, it IS their business; but there are some side effects. When a major company pulls out of a joint venture such as GAMA, it dilutes everybody's ability to expand the hobby. With all the infighting and the ban and counter-ban on games, players are eventually going to be faced with a choice: "Which convention do I go to?" If they choose one, they can't play game "X". If they choose the other, game "Y" is similarly proscribed. Very few people can afford to go to two major conventions, even if they happen to be in the same general region.

I've heard a lot of speculations and statements (some of them official) about why TSR withdrew from GAMA. I believe that TSR's official attitude is that the GENCON series of conventions, run exclusively by TSR, "better serves the interest of Adventure Gaming". The attitude seems to be more "self-serving" in light of the rumors I hear that there will be no exhibitors at GENCON except for TSR.

All I can say is that the process of walling oneself off from the rest of the world is seldom beneficial. No one in this hobby is too BIG to cooperate. The US versus THEM attitude can become all-consuming. Like any obsession, it prevents growth.

In the final analysis, ORIGINS and GENCON will continue to co-exist. Whether the parties involved will ever come to any sort of detente is impossible to say; but meanwhile, the real victims will be the gamers.

★

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Imagine that the greatest heroes of a mythical land are called together for an epic quest. They seek a treasure — the most magnificent treasure in the world — a ram's fleece of spun gold.

Along the way, they meet and conquer giants, witches, amazons, and rescue a king. They fight undead warriors and outwit a dragon. They capture the treasure and escape a king's entire fleet to return home triumphant — not only with the golden fleece, but with the king's beautiful and magical daughter as a willing passenger.

Great scenario for a role playing game, isn't it?

What if I also told you that this scenario was over 2,500 years old?

The word "classic" is over-used; but to the tale of Jason and the Argonauts, it applies completely. It is one of the oldest and most venerable myths of the ancient world. It's also one hell-of-a good story.

I'm surprised that no one thought to do a role playing game based on Greek mythology before HEROES OF OLYMPUS. It seems ready-made for role playing with its enormous variety of frightening monsters, capricious gods, and noble warriors. But somehow our interest was caught first by the Middle Ages. That's a shame, because the Medieval Era certainly is not a better, and is possibly a worse, base for a role playing universe than Ancient Greece.

The heroes of the Middle Ages are an unending string of two-dimensional do-gooders or equally cardboard bad guys. They are usually full of faith and short on brains. Roland, St. George, King Arthur and his knights all performed endless rounds of beast-slaying, maiden rescuing, and humble obeisance to God and King. When they love, it's a sin. Their conspiracies would be apparent to a five-year-old child and even when they fight, either their pride or their low intelligence gets in the way. (If you don't believe me, try reading about Roland sometime.) The Greek heroes are, in contrast, treacherous and self-sacrificing, generous and greedy, vengeful and just, humorous and gloomy — in other words human, and many times all too human. It's a refreshing change of pace in Mythos.

Likewise, the gods who influence and intervene in the affairs of these heroes exhibit all kinds of typically-human behavior. They are, in turn, affectionate and jealous, protective and threatening. They are constantly involved in a game of "one-upmanship" with one another.

Here, at last, is a mythos with some personality. Unlike the tales of the Middle Ages, where good and bad are so dismally clear cut, the Greeks have spun themselves legends where god and hero alike have many facets, both good and bad. ★

LOOSE ENDS

by Ken Hart

CORRECTION: In issue #2 of NEXUS, the author of the article, "Panzers at Kursk", was mistakenly omitted. The author of this article is Stephen V. Cole, the designer of the game.

Q: Whatever happened to GUNSHIP and TO NO END?

A: These were pocket games scheduled to be released a long time ago. Due to design problems, TO NO END has been scrapped, and GUNSHIP is still in limbo. However, there is an excellent chance GUNSHIP will someday be published.

BATTLEWAGON

Q: In the mines rule (12.0), it says to use the TORPEDO DAMAGE TABLE to resolve mine explosions. Should I use the "Spread" or "Single" column? Also, the rules mention the "non-evading" and the "evading" column . . . what is meant by this?

A: The "Spread" column is used. The rule should have read that ships receive a "-2" modifier for evading after at least one ship in the formation has been hit.

FEDERATION SPACE

Q: Is a scout placed in the Reserve Box considered to be "in combat"?

A: No.

Q: Are Base Stations, Starbases and Systems affected by a scout's ECM?

A: Yes, if the scout is in combat.

Q: Can a fighter squadron exist without it's carrier vehicle if it is in the same hex as a friendly Base Station, Starbase or Planetary System?

A: Yes.

Q: How are the scouts, given in NEXUS #1, distributed?

A: Klingon - 1 each; Federation Border Fleet, Kzinti Border Fleet and 1st Reserve Fleet
Kzinti - 1 each; 1st, 2nd and 3rd Fleets
Gorn - 1 each 1st and 2nd Fleets
Hydran - both in the main Fleet. ★

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