

CLAWMARKS 17

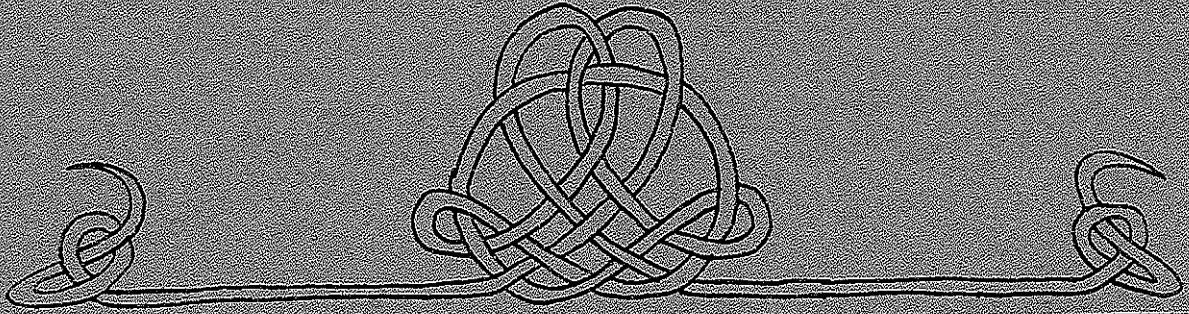
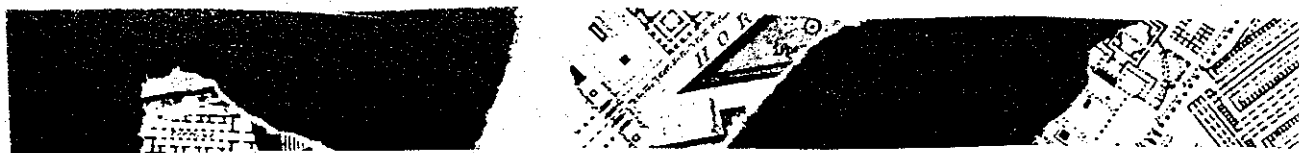


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Creators and Contributors

Editor: Dylan Craig Artwork: Robyn Saul, Robanne
Art Editor & Layout: Robanne Miller Miller, *2000 AD*, *Watchmen*



1

Dear Editors

What happened to Tag, you bastards? I went and bought my silly plastic gun, and now I want some blood!

Signed,
Georgie Elvirus Rex III

Dear Rex

Tag is still on. Due to complete inertia on the part of your overpaid, gravy-sucking, capitalist, running-dog, compatriots in the committee, it hasn't got past the initial planning stages but we are confident that it will be in place by the end of the term.

Eds.

Dear Mrs Editor

Lend me your ears! My question in CLAWMarks 16 about Gary Larson has gone unanswered. Since the re-election of the Great Satan, Clinton, things have only gotten better. What do you plan to do?

Yours with Feeling,
Mike Tyson.

Dear Mike

I'm sorry, but we still don't see the "wider appeal". By the way, aren't you supposed to do your talking in the ring?

The Eds.



Dear CLAWMarks

Life is terrible. It is dull, dull, dull. It would be better if there were more libraries. And more three dimensional objects and alia.

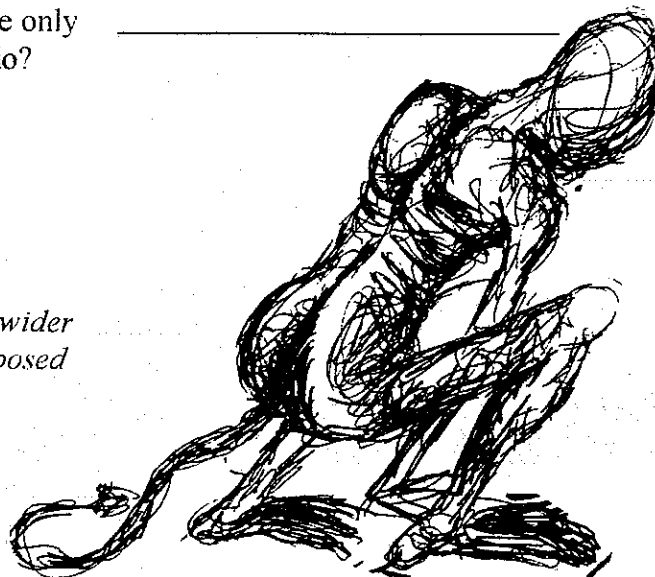
Yours philologically,
Snuck

Dear Snuck

*Boy, you really sneaked that one up on us. And yes, more libraries might be good, but what if they were all *trade union* libraries?*

Besides, who gives a sod about classifying some daft old poet's bag?

Yours gramatically
Eds



Letter from the Editor

2

Second cup of coffee - good. Second donut. Always good. Second punch in the jaw - not so much good, but less painful due to numbness caused by first punch.

Second Clawmarks - see previous paragraph.

Thanks are especially due to those who made this edition (17) possible: **Robanne**, for being so nice about being chained to an easel for two weeks and made to paint until her toes curled; **Austin**, for keeping the Editor supplied with .RST files (and **Phil** for keeping the Editor supplied with humour); **Jess**, for being Jess; and my little wooly pig for pestering me for food and taking me for walks to clear my head and not minding being ignored too much. Also, **Andrew S** for having Cthulhu coaxed out of him with such good grace (and of course for exemplary DMing which serves as due inspiration); and that devilishly dashing dervish, **Duncan**, for putting course requirements second to baling out CLAW on a regular basis. There are no words to describe my thanks.

There are, however, plenty of other words to describe other stuff, and you're about to meet some of them. Good luck!



Tentacles and Tommyguns

Expansion Rules for Firefights and Combat in Call of Cthulhu

by Andrew Sturman and Dylan Craig

Call of Cthulhu is a popular horror RPG set in the 1920's, which pits the PC's against the eldritch horrors of the Cthulhu Mythos. However, for all the weapon-richness of the genre, very little work has been done on firearms and their realistic and effective use in the game. Granted, most of the unearthly horrors the PCs might face are immune to bullets on some level, but what about the mad cultists, hired thugs and merciless assassins associated with them? This shortcoming is especially evident in the Cthulhu Now setting, which is a modern-day setting where the PC's have access to everything from an Uzi to a .50 cal sniper rifle. The article which follows represents an expansion on the firearm rules developed over a year-long Cthulhu campaign.

Basic Premises: In CoC, attacks are rolled on d100, and succeed if the result is under the PC's skill with that particular weapon. Firearm skills can be expected to range from 25 (utterly untrained) to around 90 (Olympic-class). Additionally, each weapon has both a Base Range, within which it is most effective, and a Damage potential according to the type of round it chambers. Range modifiers are determined according to the number of multiples of the Base Range away the target is, which is the number of times the firer's skill is halved - if, for instance, a weapon's base range is 15 yards, and the target is 45 yards away, the unlucky firer divides his or her skill by 4. If, however, the target is closer to the firer in feet than a number of feet equal to the firer's Dexterity score, the skill is rather doubled. This represents "Point-Blank" range.

Rules Expansion 1: Hit Locations

For more reality in combat, assume that the human body is divided up into the following regions: Head, Arms, Chest, Abdomen, and Legs. The Hit Points of each location now decrease due to damage at the same time as the normal Hit Points score - so a 4 point wound will now do 4 points of damage to both the Hit Points score and to the location Hit Points where it struck. The Chest and each Leg have Hit Points equal to half the character's total Hit Points; the Arms, Belly and Head each have one third. Thus someone with 12 HP's would have 6 in the chest and each leg, and 3 in all other locations. The effects of damage on limbs is easy to adjudicate; when a location has taken hits greater than it's capacity, it is useless and hangs broken (in the case of the head, this means unconsciousness; for the belly or torso, practical immobilisation). When a location has taken twice it's capacity in hits, it is destroyed or severed from the body.

The inclusion of hit locations allows for more dramatic wound effects in combat ("Donny, your right arm lies paralysed by the Leng Spider's poisoned bite. You watch helplessly as your gun falls from your nerveless fingers..."), as well as the realistic adjudication of the effects of cover or body armour.

Rules Expansion 2: Throwing Knives

Although not strictly a modern attack form, this was another aspect of the CoC combat system which needed examination. We suggest the use of the following table:

Skill:	00-30%	31-59%	60-89%	90+
Very Small	1 / rnd	2 / rnd	3 / rnd	4 / rnd
	(2-3" blade - shuriken, darts, small throwing knives. Dmg 1d3)			
Small	1 / rnd	3/2 rnds	2 / rnd	3 / rnd
	(3-5" blades - most throwing knives. Dmg 1d4+1)			
Large	1/2 rnds	1 / rnd	3/2 rnds	2 / rnd
	(6-8" blades - large knives, kitchen knives, etc. Dmg 1d6+1)			
Very Large	1/3 rnds	1/2 rnds	1 / rnd	3 / 2 rnds
	(Machetes, Hand Axes, and Javelins. Dmg 1d8+1)			

Note that, in the case of multiple attacks, it is assumed that the knives are held ready in the hands at the beginning of the round, and that both hands are free for use. If this is not the case, then the rate of throwing will never rise above 1 as the thrower must laboriously draw and throw each projectile.

Rules Expansion 3: Called Shots

Of course, once you give targets hit locations it is inevitable that players will start sniping at them!. The following easy rule of thumb applies:

Location Aimed For	Divide Skill By
Upper vs. Lower Body	1
Chest, Legs	2
Belly, Arms	3
Head	5

Note that aiming for the Upper Body (i.e., Head, Arms, Chest & Belly), vs. the Lower Body (Legs and Belly), does not incur a penalty. However, the target must be in full view for this to be the case; in other words, all the location associated with the half of the body in question must be visible. This table also lends itself to the use of cover well; the crazed maniac who is only partly visible behind the shrieking sacrificial victim they are holding hostage is now suddenly a viable target! (Rayyy...). It is also safe to assume that when in Point Blank range (Range in Feet < DEX), the firer may call their shot to any hit location without penalty. However, you may wish this to

negate the normal double skill modifier given at point-blank range, on the grounds that even at 10 feet, shooting a weaving cultist clean through the forehead is easier said than done.

In the case of shots whose location is not called, a random d10 roll will allow the location of the hit to be ascertained thus:

Head: 1	Right Arm: 5
Chest: 2, 3	Left Arm: 6
Belly: 4	Right Leg: 7, 8
	Left leg: 9, 0

Although slightly simplistic, these tables allow the quick resolution of missile attacks against human targets in a more efficient way than is found in the CoC rulebook.

Rules Expansion 4: Rate of Fire

Although rate of fire by weapon is already a feature of the CoC combat system, it is not set out with any regard to the skill of the individual shooter. In effect, this led to PCs who were novice shooters at best, discharging wild volleys from many-barrelled shotguns and light automatics with glee, suffering no penalties whatsoever. Thus, the following rule, which creates a top-out rate of fire linked to skill, was created. Use of this system returns rapid-fire to the realms of the professional gunfighter and pistoleer, contributing to a less gun-crazy set of Investigators.

<u>Pistols: Maximum Rate of Fire</u>	
Max Shots per round equals Skill / 25 (round up).	
<u>Shotguns: Maximum Rate of Fire</u>	
Skill	0-30% 1/2 (1 shot every 2 rounds)
	31-60% 1
	61-90% 3/2 (2 shots, then 1 next round)
	91-100% 2

Note that, in both cases, the rate of fire may not exceed the base rate of fire of the weapon, no matter how high the firer's skill is. Also, note that this table assumes a 2 second combat round.

Several new rules are also corollary to this expansion. Firstly, actions in a combat round are assumed to happen in descending order of Dexterity (18 goes first, then 17, etc.), thus multiple shots happen at the appropriate fraction of the firer's Dex; for instance, should a character with Dex 15 fire 3 shots during the course of a round, they will be resolved individually at Dex 15, Dex 10, and Dex 5, as 3 separate attacks. Note that should events occur which require the firer changing his or her action (for instance, ducking to react to an unexpected threat), the firer may lose some or all of these attacks; additionally, switching targets decreases the number of attacks possible



by one, as the firer has to bring the gun to bear on each new target. Thus, our exemplary PC with Dex 15 could only fire 2 shots if he wished to engage two separate targets.

Note that these ROF rules assume that the PC has their weapon drawn or unslung, with a round chambered, and pointed vaguely in the direction of the target.

If the gun has been aimed at the target, safety off and ready to fire since the last round, the existing x2 bonus for aiming can be used, or the PC can elect to get an additional shot at Dex x 2 in the combat round, to represent their "getting a drop" on the target. This makes the "Freeze, FBI" situation quite deadly.

PC's drawing weapons in a round halve their ROF for that turn (round up), and their first shot is at 1/2 Dex rank.

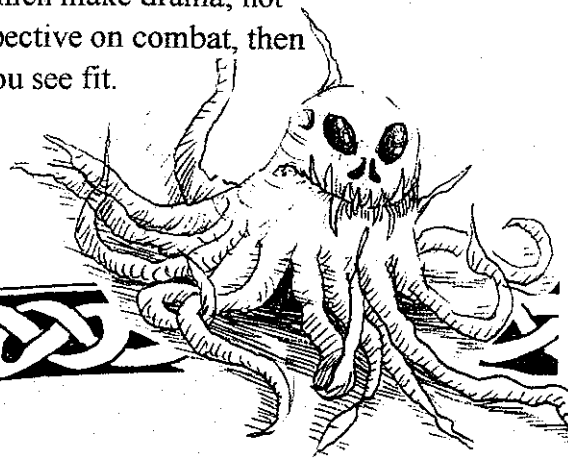
Rules Expansion 5: Blind Firing

We can define blind firing as the act of loosing off a flurry of shots at a target, or set of targets. As a rule of thumb, the PC may fire twice the number of shots normally possible, but these are fired using 1/5th of normal skill, which can also be defined as the level at which fire against invisible targets or targets in melee combat with the firer should be resolved. Of course, range modifiers are still applies on top of this, so a four-shot volley delivered at arms-length still has a good chance of hitting the target.

Rules Expansion 6: Using Two Pistols Simultaneously

We suggest the inclusion of a new skill, "Two-Guns", with a base equal to the PC's Dexterity. This skill develops normally, and can increase with experience, but can never exceed the PC's Handgun skill. Use of this skill, with the appropriate pair of handguns, allows the PC to get an effective 1.5 times modifier to his or her rate of fire (rounded up). Thus a PC armed with a modern 9mm automatic (ROF 3), could get up to 5 shots a round, each rolled on his or her Two-Guns skill. This represents alternating fire with similar or identical handguns, and a modifier of -10% for using dissimilar handguns should be imposed. Of course, blind-firing with two guns is possible, for a withering hail of lead fired at 3 times normal ROF. DM's should note that the PC's maximum ROF should be calculated using the larger of his or her Handgun or 2-Guns skill.

The inclusion of these "house rules" is, we feel, vital for any good CoC campaign where combat is emphasised. Of course, it is dramatics which make drama, not mechanics, and if your CoC campaign has a different perspective on combat, then please feel free to modify or ignore these expansions as you see fit.



The Archbigot of Necropolis

CLAWs' trusty stalwart of undiluted prejudice returns with a torrent of ichor vili
other torrents of ichor, with his latest offering:

68 Reasons Why I Hate Cthulhu Monsters

They suck.

They're "rugose".

They use the word "rugose".

They dribble ichor all over you.

They make you go loony.

They extract your brain.

They bear absolutely no resemblance to their namesakes.

They're copyrighted.

They're hard to spoof.

They necessitate the use of shoddy game mechanics.

Cthulhu DM's expect you to have never heard of them.

They make me want to blow chunks.

They eat buckshot like shatter candy.

They have 3-digit CONs.

Most of them weren't even invented by Lovecraft.

They could conquer Earth at any time.

They have freckles.

They have ludicrously unlikely forms.

Their motivations are unclear.

They blow goats.

Some of them are related to hicks.

(This means you, Wilbur).

When in hell is RI'yeh anyway?

They may terrify wiener head girlies.

They are too hard to summon.

There's a card game about them.

Goats blow them.

Cthulhu can't even drive a car.

It, like, funky and into guns and stuff.

They aren't even faintly scary.

They have no sense of rhythm.

They establish unlikely cults.

They won't stay dead, dammit!

They are too easy to summon.

They hang out in gross and boring places like Cornwall.

They make goats blow each other (eww...)

They're not playful enough. "Here boy!

Fetcha stick!"

They have given rise to dodgy imitations in WoD systems.

They're utterly, unmitigatedly crap.

They cause unlikely and illogical phobias.

Questing to "reveal the Truth" gets so boring.

They're utter and total buftie-boy wimps. Their bosses are too powerful to use in a campaign.

They are shoddily constructed.

"Roll a SAN check". As if!

They necessitate the use of elaborate cover-ups.

They are slimy, smelly and gross.

They don't appreciate a good cappuccino.

They are divided into arbitrary groups.

They inspire nausea.

They eat bananas.

They're almost impossible to transport to and from the venue.

They don't sweep the CLAW room.

They lurk under the Mistletoe at Xmas.

They are unreliable.

They assimilate natives.

They encourage cutesy marketing ploys.

Goats make them blow each other.

They lack "punch".

They're filthy animals.

They don't respect the law.

They have no resale value.

They are too rare to collect.

They don't appreciate good, hot lead.

They encourage ludicrously overprepared roleplaying.

They have dangerous human lackeys.

Yithians look stupid..

They are too easy to visualise.

"Call of Cthulhu", the movie, wouldn't have any decent actors in it.

They're dumb, dumb, dumb.

Bananas are a Herb

And other conversation-stoppers

by Lara Davison

In wind and rain, sun and shine we are there, sitting on the stairs and chairs just outside the CLAW Room. The usual gang of malcontents comprises smokers, those too lazy to go to anywhere else (including lectures), and the odd rebel who just wants some fresh air (yeah - right!)

On the surface, our group does not appear to be particularly important - just a cluster of computer nerds and Goths talking and smoking. But some of you more "conversationally challenged" CLAW members might be interested in a brief rundown on the kind of things we talk about... on the off chance that you, too, are sucked into our whirlpool...

Whatever your area of interest, there has been or will be a conversation that will intrigue or irritate you. Linguistics your thing? You might have enjoyed the "polite discussion" about the plural of mongoose, the "collective noun quiz", or the raging debate on why the plural of "ox" is "oxen", but the plural of "fox" is not "foxen".

For all you science buffs, there have been extended lectures on Schrodinger's cat, time travel, glassy glassy, quantum mechanics and the virtues of Asimov, Clark and Wyndom. (Pay attention, class - there will be a test on Thursday -Ed).

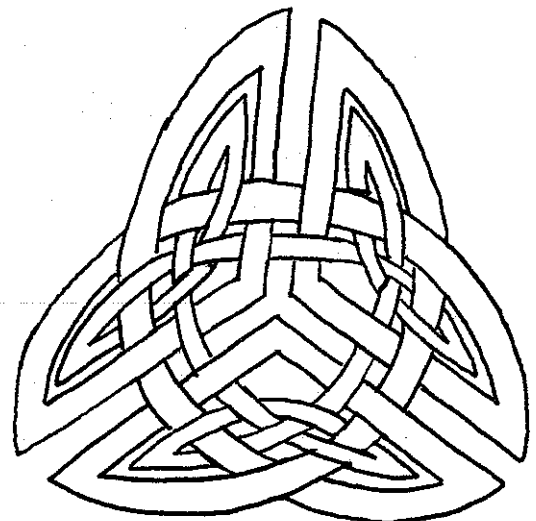
For music lovers, the "hot topic" has been the question of what exactly Trent Reznor is saying, and my lecture to Jordan about why Bruce Dickinson is **not** just an old tosser who can't sing. On the political front, there have been various theories expanded - mostly Jordan arguing in favour of world peace, unity, and helping your fellow man, and me arguing for the enforcement of pregnancy licenses, and getting the weak to bugger off, instead of giving them more of our damned *food!*

Why buy a TV? There have been play-by-play accounts of Monty Python, The Simpsons, Animaniacs and The Black Hole - not to mention the A Team, Magnum, and Under the Mountain (shudder), or the hysterical breakdown of the year's worst horror movies. Ever wondered the exact order of who shot who in Reservoir Dogs?

Some of the age-old questions we have struggled with:

Is a coconut a fruit or a nut? Is cigarette gunk worse when inhaled or exhaled? What was the most painful medieval torture? Who is winning in VGA Planets, and why? Is a Big Mac better than a Whopper? Has Alex ever been to a lecture? What is the best form of birth control? What are the 7 wonders of the world? Are spinning heads and green puke an appropriate response to His People's attentions? If Mickey is a mouse, Donald a duck and Pluto a dog, what the hell is Goofy? And, finally, would or would it not be cool to grow grass and other plants out the top of our heads?

So, if these and similar questions jiggle your synapses, grab a smoke and drop by. We may shun you - but then again, we may not...



The Fifth Age - TSR 1148

A Review of CLAWs' latest free acquisition

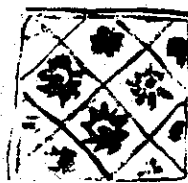
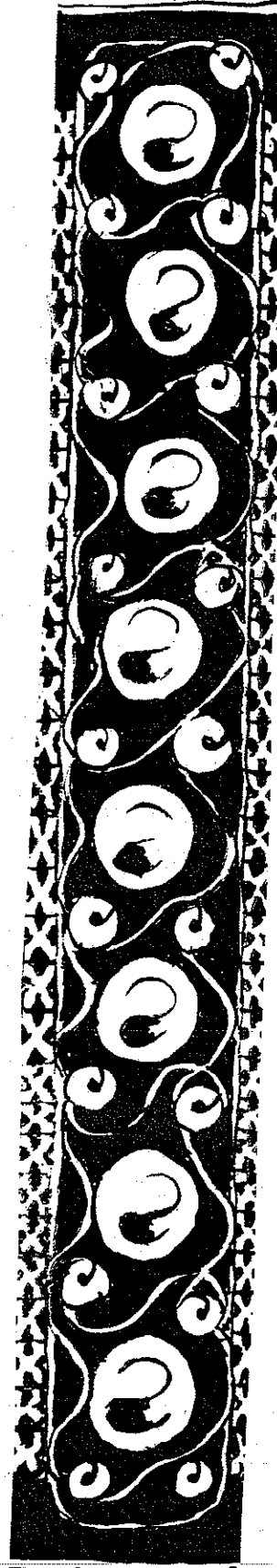
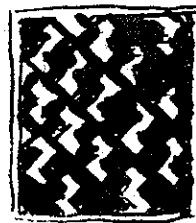
by *Simon Cross*

Somewhat tired and dishevelled after a long weekend at ICON, the victorious (second placed) 'Grey Aliens' team found themselves contemplating their prize - Pandora's Cardboard Box. Marked with evil runes (the TSR and Dragon Lance labels) as well as the usual propaganda, things were not looking good. Already certain Cthulhu fans were muttering: "God, a TSR product... quick, maybe its afraid of fire" and getting an evil glint in their eyes. Despite Austin's comments and a tacky exterior the Fifth Age role-playing set may contain a few gems deep within.

The new role-playing system, set in the fifth age of Krynn (DragonLance), is contained within one tiny 128 page, A5 booklet. No supplements. No thieves, mages, fighters, humans, elves or grey aliens handbooks - Well done TSR. On the down side parts of the book are still badly written, often rules appear arbitrary and the system suffers from TSR's 'bash, bash' mentality. I wouldn't mind if TSR borrowed some of White Wolf's artists either.

The new system centers on a pack of cards referred to as the 'Fate Deck'. The custom deck consisting of 8 suits of 9 cards (corresponding to 8 attributes) and 1 suit of 10 cards (corresponding to misfortune) provide the basis for everything from character creation to spell casting. Superficially the card system bares a lot of resemblance to Castle Falkenstein's, but trumps (the suit matching the attribute being used to perform the action) are handled differently. In Fifth Age, using a trump allows you to draw an extra card from the deck and add it to your action. In Falkenstein only a trump card is worth its full face value.

The two gem's within Fifth Age are character creation and its magic system. Possibly the first system to offer character creation in under 5 minutes (I hear Dylan cry: "My 'Clash By Night' was first!"), I found Fifth Age refreshing after spending 3 hours wrestling with the *Ars Magica* rulebook to create my Hedge wizard. Draw 12 cards. Assign 8 of the cards to your 8 stats, the other 4 to various things like reputation, social status, etc. and you're done. Of course, there are a few factors to remember - such as assigning cards to attributes they aren't suited for brings penalties - but once you've read the 3 A5 pages you'll have no problems. My only misgiving is that the characters lack that intangible quality: 'depth'. Good role-playing should rectify this and anyway they're still wonderful for a short once off.



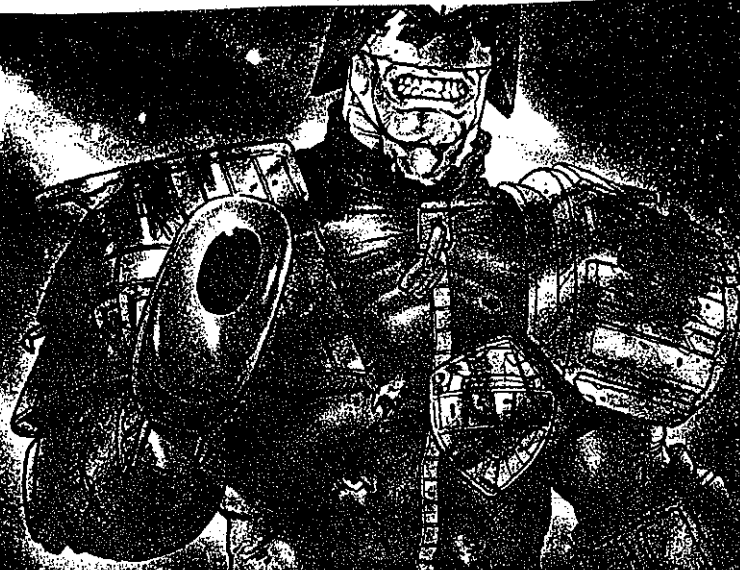
I have no idea who wrote the magic system, but it definitely wasn't the same team who did the AD&D one. I definitely rate this as the system's strongest feature. Gone are the days of spell lists and memorisation - enter power points and a free-form magic system. Mages (sorcerers and mystics) get to design their own spells on the fly with a small set of rules defining a difficulty for the spell. Combining this with a set of vaguely defined character concepts for mages and you have a neat, compact magic system.

In case you were worrying that TSR had finally got something right - make way for the combat system. Possibly worse (although thankfully shorter) than the original AD&D combat system, the Fifth Age combat system is filled with silly ranges, and actions and other bits junk. I would discard or ignore most of it and replace it with something which approaches realism. Their new concept of hit points deserves some applause though. Taking hits forces you to discard cards until their value equals the number of hits. You do not redraw these discarded cards until you heal. This neatly side steps the problem of how taking damage affects your ability to act, and might be worth trying out in a few other card-based systems.

Enough about the system itself. Also within the Pandora's box is 'Dusk or Dawn' a history of Krynn and a description of things as they stand in the fifth age. Although I haven't had a chance to read it thoroughly, it might be worthwhile if you're wanting to run a campaign set in Krynn. However, don't expect light reading. It looks like a bit of a wade for someone not deeply interested in the economics of Krynn. Also included is a Ye Olde Starter Module - entitled 'Heroes of a New Age' - that Wayne will be running once his CompSci is under control. I'm sure he will be putting the miniature DM-screen (designed for baby role-players) and free map of Krynn to good use.

Adios, Amigos! If anyone would like to play in Wayne's module email:
whuman@cs.uct.ac.za

Grey Aliens were: Dylan Craig (DM), Austin Chamberlain, Simon Cross, Robanne Miller (aka Hitler) and Nenad Ristic.





Multiple Bob Reports:

The Public Must Know! This edition of CLAWMarks introduces the first ever **Multiple Bob** column, dedicated to detailing events of interest that befall CLAW Members in their "extramural" lives. This edition's piece involves the first-person testimony of Austin Chamberlain, our most esteemed Head Librarian, and the results of an innocent little midnight trip by him and his friends to the Groote Schuur cemetery...

After changing a flat tire outside Springfields and having lots of coffee at Kuzmas, we felt that a return trip to the cemetery would be a Good Idea ^(tm). This it was not. It was a Bad Idea ^(tm), since in the interim the paranoid bastards building on the site had placed three or four caretakers on the site.

So, we pulled up outside the cemetery and entered through the side gate. This meant we didn't meet the caretakers at all, which was both a good thing and a bad thing. They saw us first, since they were sitting immobile in darkness about 50m away. All they saw was five black-clad figures picking their way through mud and piles of broken tombstones, so being the conscientious and brave individuals that they are, they decided not to ask us what we were doing but call Fidelity Guards instead. The first we saw of them was two of them running across a section of open ground into the shadow of a container/office; they banged and rattled at the thing a bit before heading inside. Naturally, we assumed that they were the dodgy ones, and ducked into a large pile of gravestones. Our first mistake was when two of us decided to crawl as close as possible to see what they were doing and what that banging was (they were trying to scare us off by banging the side of the container). The two of us were hidden behind small piles of stones, with open

ground between us and them and an expanse of small piles of masonry, about knee-height, behind us. This meant that I, being the foremost fool, didn't see the approaching caretakers and security guard until it was too late to run. So I stood up.

After I caused a bit of a stir amongst them, the guard searched me at gunpoint before demanding to know where the others were. Using my finely honed interrogation resistance techniques, I told him they had left already. Alas, the guard was persistent, and found the other brave one amongst us. We were hustled to his van, soon to be joined by the other three. After the semi-illiterate guard had tried to write down one foreign name and three long ones, he gave up and drove us to the police station.

At the station, we stood confidently in the foyer while several police watched us suspiciously. We happily told the expurgated truth, which was that we liked graveyards, especially at night, and that we would have had a picnic if we had thought to bring food (for the record, I wasn't the one to say that). So, after the police had a quiet aside with the rent-a-cop, they asked us nicely not to go into the cemetery again and let us go. The guard drove off in a huff, leaving us to walk back from the Woodstock police station to Observatory.

*Good to that know our streets are being kept safe from **real** criminals by super-intelligent rent-a-cops like those employed by Fid G these days, eh? -Ed.*







Ghost of CLAWMARKS Past

A retrospective of the top articles in some previous editions of the CLAW journal.

by Dylan Craig

CLAWMARKS 1: 30 pages. Featured the "weapons master" character class for AD&D (1st Ed). A specialised fighter class, the weapons master paralleled the oriental concept of the "sword sage" - a non-Lawful travelling master. Also contained new Shadow Illusion spells for AD&D, and a system for spell design. First appearance of Classifieds. Edited by Richard Pruss and Giles Embleton.

CLAWMARKS 2: 18 pages. A lean tome, but with good features like an article on Ward Magic, four pages on designing magical swords, and the first ever Forum. Edited by A Steele, Jessica, and Giles Embleton.

CLAWMARKS 4: 46 pages. Beginning to flex it's muscles, number 4 was a serious chunk of dead tree, with reviews of the Cyberpunk-genre games beginning to flood the market, Exorcist and Vampire character classes for AD&D, and the famous Vegetable Lord character class for (gasp) *Rolemaster*! Number 4 was the first issue to include advertising, and even had a feature on other role-playing groups in South Africa. Edited by Giles Embleton, Jessica, Anthony Steele, and Carlo Kruger.

CLAWMARKS 6: Ah, the memories. A Shadowrun review, a campaign add-on for Cybergames detailing the High Frontier of Space by Andrew Sturman, a list of slightly demented deities (Jajanus, the god of looking three ways at once), the Vegetable Tarot, 42 reasons why I hate Parents, an excellent article on the feared repeating crossbow (with diagrams, and stats for AD&D and *Rolemaster*) and all for R2,00. 38 pages, and more editors than you can shake a stick at. A silly issue.

CLAWMARKS 7: 32 pages. The CLAW transformation, butterfly-like, from it's AD&D stage became final with issue seven: 66 reasons why I hate AD&D, the Dragon as a character class for *Rolemaster*, and a realistic look at computers in the world of Cyberpunk. The first whinges of role-playing snobbery were not limited to AD&D, however - first "Brutal World of Cyberpunk" Forum article run, with Cyberpunk's "validity" as a role-playing system questioned. Also featured the excellent "No Pain, No Gain" article which laid out a system of burning temporary CON for power points in *Rolemaster*. Edited by Jessica and Eckhard Gartz.

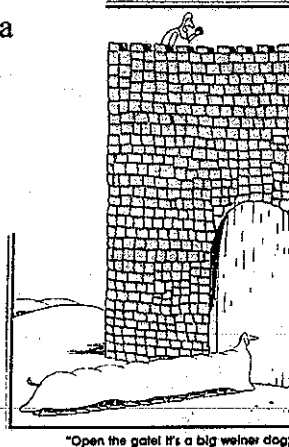
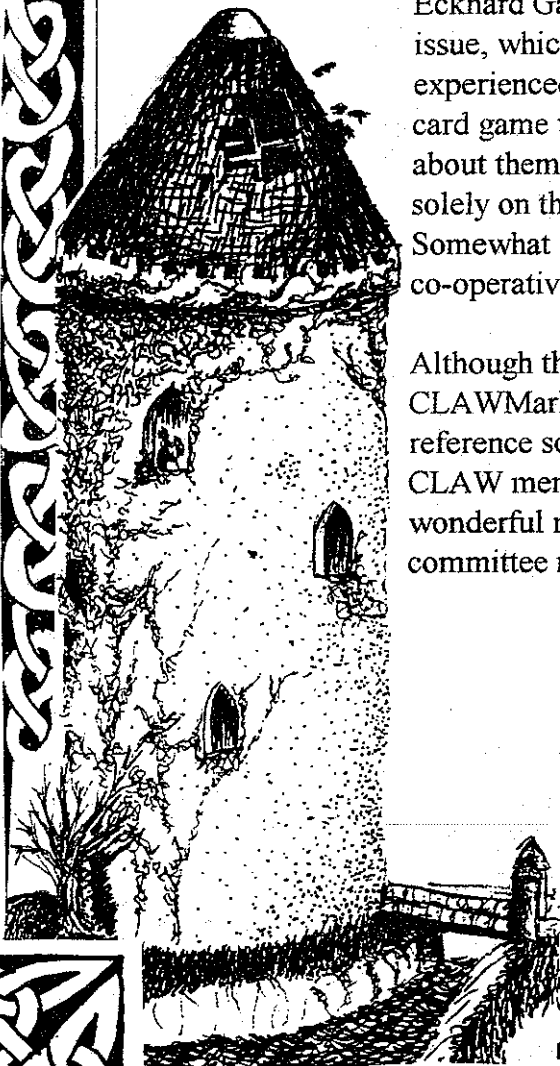
CLAWMARKS 9: 51 pages. Another forest-buster, issue nine was crammed with reviews of, and supplements for, the flavour of the year: *Ars Magica*. It also discussed the difficulties of role-playing with one's friends ("Deathly Utter Destroyers of Absolutely Everything", by Jessica), and had a most useful (and

well-researched) article detailing the effects of various drugs for the Cyberpunk game. The brief resurgence of AD&D in the form of the Nihilist character class was championed by Jonno Hoffenberg, and even the mysterious master smith Ulbrecht found time to write an article on medieval swords and fighting techniques. Edited by Andrew Shackleton, Jessica, and Liza van Zyl.

CLAWMARKS 10: A whopping 56 pages, mostly due to a 478-item list for the article "Why I hate the UCT Council", and a seven-page forum on tournament design. Whew! The Rolemaster Shapechanger character class by Jessica was a well-researched and handy piece, as was David Maclay's brilliant article "Irritations, Minor and Otherwise", which is a must for sadistic DM's with parties who treat their PC's as just a set of numbers to hang a sword on. A chubby, wordy little text, but not without merit. Editors were Andrew Shackleton, Jessica, and Karen Greaves.

CLAWMARKS 14: Back to sane lengths at 46 pages. Issue fourteen was designed as a handout targeting beginners specifically, so most of it's articles were of the "A rookies guide to..." format, covering Role-playing, Jyhad, LARPing, Castle Falkenstein, Call of Cthulhu, and so on. Other important contents were a useful piece for designing non-magical treasure in medieval treasure troves, by Eckhard Gartz. A list of new Ars Magica spells concluded the issue, which, despite it's stunning cover art, left most experienced role-players slightly bemused. What were these card game thingies? And why were all the freshers so excited about them? The editorial task had, for the first time, fallen solely on the shoulders of just one person - Kathy Manchip. Somewhat of the beginning of the end, as far as the concept of co-operative editorial effort was concerned.

Although this is by no means a complete list of back issues of CLAWMarks, hopefully it will serve a useful role as a reference source, and as a guide for those age-challenged CLAW member interested in acquiring a full set of this wonderful mag. Back issues can be arranged - speak to a committee member.



By Train To the Place That Looks Like The Bits of DOOM You Can't Get In The Shareware Version

Or, Eleven by Train: ICON 1997

by Robanne Miller + Dr P Schnookiekiss

15

In South Africa it seems that all good bastions of trash tabloids (*You, Personality*, etc.) are fond of getting into debates on the letter pages about the merits of travelling by train, particularly the Trans-Karoo from Cape Town to Gauteng. So, naturally, we jumped at the opportunity to actually travel on said train, if only to meet all those wonderful *Personality* reporters and *You* subscribers. Yes... quite.

A motley bunch we were too. According to our tickets, there were not only the Eastwood brothers (Jordan and... *Philip?*) travelling in our party, but also two sets of siamese twins (the J Tiffin twins and the A Chamberlain twins). Apparently, Spoornet assumed that some radical surgery was to be performed in Johannesburg, because we noticed that one half of each twin was travelling back down two days after the rest of the party departed. Oh well. Complicating the situation further was our total lack of conformance to the student cards we'd had to give in to cash in on the student discount. So, after a brief scuffle over the allocation of cover identities to match the ticket holders ("You be Patrick!" "No, I want to be Patrick." "Can I be Jurgen?", etc.), it was off to the tender mercies of the Spoornet staff.

The Trans-Karoo leaves daily from Cape Town Station at about 9:20am, and takes 27 hours to chug laboriously up to Joeys. Approximately midway, it passes it's sister train, which is busy doing exactly

the same thing in reverse. A passing conductor cheerfully informed us that Johannesburg station wasn't "nearly as civilised as Cape Town Station", doing wonders for our general unease at even heading in the vague direction of Hijackville in the first place. Not to worry - the aforementioned conductor then proceeded to hijack most of our luggage, as well as two ICON modules and a Magic player (Andrew), whisking them off to place or places unknowable while the rest of us huddled like nervous chimps in the terminal.

By the time we tracked them down, it was time to depart. It was then that we realised that those merry pranksters at Spoornet had failed to book us into adjoining carriages, let alone compartments. While trying to swop with the people in the compartment next to us, I made a nice German friend who seemed quite happy to ride on the top of the train for me - even though he didn't understand a word I said and could only say "Yes, yes" in an enthusiastic way. However, the two uppity South Africans with rucksacks (it's official - 50 litre backpacks make you a **real** man) seemed only able to say "No, no", so we were forced to separate into a Magic compartment in one carriage and a... well, "Anything-But" compartment in separate carriages.

Travel seemed to affect our brains quite deeply (either that, or the Spoornet coffee), and very soon the conversation had turned to the best way to avoid Athlete's Foot and shower at the same



time. I will draw a polite veil over this discussion - suffice to say, we concluded that it was easier for men than for women. After that, and Dylan's remark, "I wonder how many people before me have thought that these washbasins look just like little toilets?", none of us showered for the rest of the trip.

The miles crawled by. Boredom set in.

Spoornet has two kinds of ways of preparing steak ("done" and "not done"), and only one kind of eating implement (a butter knife). We discovered this in the achingly badly-run dining car. If people in a Steers were this clueless, they'd be crucified on telegraph poles all down Main Road by the second customer - apparently, Spoornet removes that part of the brain which regulates activity levels from it's employees on induction.

More miles piled up. We chewed on dinner. Little did I know, however, that we were being scrutinised "as a being with a microscope might scrutinise the insects that swarm and multiply in a drop of water..."

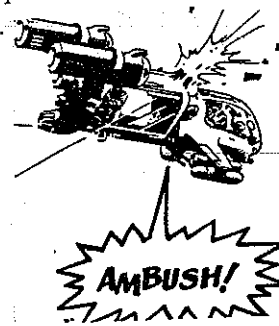
Her name was Diane Lawson. We had just gotten down to the first big gunfight of our Viet Nam once-off, and I had just gotten hold of the biggest gun in the scenario and was laying down righteous badda-booms left and right, when Mrs Belville 1965 slid open our compartment door and fixed us with a bright, if tear-streaked, gaze. Her eyes settled on me. She gulped that she **needed** to talk to me, in tones which suggested Woman Troubles, so I accompanied her to her compartment. (I was happy to hear that young Austin and young Dylan had

slipped out of the compartment behind us and stood, armed with a tonfa and a bright yellow crook-lock, outside her compartment should any wails of distress emanate from within - my heroes).

One I was inside, the "nice lady" explained that she didn't know me, but that she had noticed me in the dining compartment and that she just **had** to play me a song. Okayyy.... the cassette left me suppressing a giggle. Was this really happening to me? "It has a nice modern beat!", she happily pointed out. Pity it was a Christian religious group. "You have to listen to the words."

Things got weirder from there. I'm one of the Holy Spirit's Chosen ones, you see, and Diane had recognised me by my long hair. (*So that's what it takes - Ed*). Not only was I then told how anyone mocking me was "sticking their fingers in god's eye", but also that my new friend had just lost everything "except her linen and her children.". How? How do you lose everything except your linen? On your way to the laundry, your house burns down? **WHAT?** I concluded that she'd watched one too many issues of "Touched by an Angel", and politely excused myself. Considering the ranges of possible responses she could have gotten from the other members of our compartment (I can picture Nenad's response: "Actually, I am a chosen one already, but not on the same side as you..."), I think Diane got off quite lightly.

Then, there was ICON. Unfortunately, bubonic plague hampered my enjoyment of the events, but there's always next year. I don't think I have been as happy to see my mad mommy on the platform after the trip back. Nice Mommy.



Return of The Iconoclasts

For those of you that have been on desert islands recently, ICON 1997 happened while you are away. Duncan Sellars got locked in the boot of a Gauteng-bound car and relates his experiences.

Planes, Trains and Automobiles

"Step right up for the greatest gathering of adventurers this side of the Ethiopian peninsula!

ICON 1997 is bigger and better than last year!"

the sign said, and so the brave party of adventurers and Magic-players from CLAW set out on their way to the Distant Northern Lands, for what promised to be a play-acting, card-playing, war-gaming, alien-chomping spectacle. Although separated by the powerful forces of the evil wizard Budget, all of the troupe managed to get there, even if some had to ride the hideous wurm Spoor'Nett, while others followed on the more leisurely Sierra steed (memories of last year haunting us), and still others flew the great bird known as Saa.


The Most Fearsome of All - Junior Wargamers

But whatever the transport, the group all arrived safely at the destination, the Edenvale Imperial Palace, which doubles as a community centre during the rest of the year. The games started seriously on the Saturday morning, with Magic, Cyberpunk, one of the four AD&D modules, and the totally hip Anime films all running simultaneously. Meanwhile, for those not so keen on getting intensely out of touch with reality, the South African Junior Wargaming Championships were starting,

in which tyrannical twelve-year-olds pitted their vast armies of orcs, dragons, and soldiers against each other, trying to determine the best prepubescent warlord. By lunchtime, the AD&D monsters had been slain, and the adventurers decided it was time for rest and provisions, and a chance to look at the other happenings around the hall, erm, Imperial Palace. A quick scout of the area turned up a large amount of comic- and card-selling stands, and even some stands offering role-playing items for sale (sniffle, sniffle). While gaming companies such as Wizards, Outer Limits, Stormseeker, Future Fantasies, and others plyed their wares, the casual gamer could get a turn at plugging rednecks or killing off heroes on the computer games, or surfing the Net at the nefarious Intekom stand. For the discerning comi... err... graphic novel collector, trading with others could be had, while some brave souls used the ICON costume competition as a cheap excuse to display their bodies in tight chainmail armour, raising interesting questions about their personal lives.

Cape Towners Unite!

Saturday afternoon saw our own Jessica Light-Snack come to the fore, as CLAW's founderess ran around seeing to her Castle Falkenstein module, The Highwayman. More AD&D and Magic also followed, but by 6pm it was time to put down the character sheets, play your last Counterspell, and get into costume for the Live Action Role Playing. As with last year, CLAW was responsible for running the LARPs, two of which were ours. These damn Transvaalers just can't get enough... Not unusually, "Dinner at the Roxy" ended with nearly everyone dead. Those present testified that a most enjoyable time was had by all, even if it did end messily...



Meanwhile, outside at the card gaming auction, vicious bidding for Magic cards led to a spilling of blood, and then.. silence. (In a slight blotch on the events, several of our CLAW types came down horribly ill that afternoon, and remained so for rest of the weekend... We hope you feel better now.)

Sunday morning saw it all start again, with Magic, more bloody AD&D, some unintelligible, (but fortunately subtitled) Manga, and Cape Town's finest, the spoof Cthulhu Cape Town module. For our Cape Town Cthulhu players, it felt exceeding weird to play a module where you could order a schwarma at Kuzmas, or chill out at Springfields - but in the end the Great Tentacled Ones got their just desserts, and all was happy. What the Gautengers thought of it, nobody really bothered to ask...

And the winners are...

After more free coffee, and refreshments from KFC, ICON attendees got to watch as the Junior Wargaming drew to its incredibly prolonged but inevitable conclusion. It was getting pretty tight now. Soon, a winner would emerge... Sunday afternoon found some of the CLAW members in a computergame design workshop, others trying desperately hard to avoid bidding for Isle of Dread materials (snigger), and others playing the generic "Icebound" module, which wasn't quite AD&D, and wasn't quite Cyberpunk, but was definitely a bit of both, and yours truly really loiked it. (Oi! Get on with it! -Ed) The damn AD&D, by the way, was STILL going...

More events, such as the Comic trading, followed, before it was all wrapped up and we could get down to doling out prizes. In front of a rowdy but almost controllable crowd, Martin Frain settled down to hand out kudos and brickbats to

assorted dubious (but remarkably fine) role-players and card-gamers. After a thankful nod in CLAW's general direction for our assistance, Martin got to the serious (it was too!) task of naming the best Magic players in each type, and the best teams and DMs in the role-playing events.

Ta-da! For the first time in a long while, CLAW walked off with a second place in the best team category, awarded to "Grey Aliens" for their outstanding performance in the modules. Congrats all round. Also to our other team, "The Ones That Got Away", for their fine roleplaying, yours truly would like to say well done. (That's it, start packing -Ed)

Our Magic players unfortunately had to settle for a 7th place in the Type II, achieved by Davin Fligel. Still, bravo, everyone!

And then, when it is all said and done, there is... dinner at Mimmo's! This year, the notorious ICON dinner was held at a quaint (I use the word loosely) Italian restaurant. While Martin and his Mexican Inquisition squad roamed the room pouring tequila down people's throats, others took the opportunity to make some impromptu speeches, or do the rumba in the aisles. (The manager was later heard to mutter "Never again! Never again!") Those hoping to discuss their weekend's roleplaying with sober, rational people were to be disappointed, as this was one serious paarr-tee... (Our deepest condolences to our sickly comrades, who had to miss this mind-blowingly awesome fiesta.)

And that was ICON 1997, too short, but oh so sweet. We would like to thank the Academy (who?), and hope to see you all there next year again.



ROLEPLAYING THE VARMINT

A review of the Boot Hill game by TSR

by Dylan Craig

This is an amazing product. There's no love lost between myself and Gary Gygax, but even I am hard pressed to find bad things to say about Boot Hill.

It's quite interesting to note that despite the weight of films, books and movies set in the Wild west genre, there are relatively few Roleplaying games with the same focus. Apart from Boot Hill, I have only been able to find one product of this type - Outlaws from ICE. It's quite likely that the GURPs system also has a Wild West supplement, but still - when you measure this against the disproportionate number of medieval, cyberpunk or horror RPG's, cowboys and indians are notable by their absence. Perhaps the reason lies with the loss of popularity of the cowboy genre in the last 10 years, but the presence, and box-office success, of movies like Unforgiven, Young Guns, Maverick, and The Quick and the Dead makes this a doubtful proposition. But enough of this speculation - let's get down to the system.

Boot Hill is a d20 based system. There are 5 characteristics, 2 of which are fairly run-of-the-mill (Strength, Co-Ordination), one addition to the norm which comes in very useful (Observation) and 2 which constitute a fairly interesting view of the character: Stature (reputation and charisma), and Luck. Character creation is fairly quick, with 2d10 rolled for each characteristic and the result modified through a table.

There are no "character classes" as such - Boot Hill has quite a comprehensive skill list (everything from Bartending to Indian Contact), which make up the character's specialities. The total sum of all one's characteristics determines the number of skills the character may have - interestingly enough, the scale is inverted, meaning that the lower your stats, the more skills you can choose. This makes for a very balanced-power group - the lightning-reflex gunslingers are not usually the ones who can speak many languages (Linguistics skill) or evaluate a mine for the presence of gold (Prospecting skill). Another interesting twist is that starting skills are rolled to determine proficiency - it is thus possible to start a character off as the best rider in the district or a medical genius, which is most satisfying after playing mainly systems where your character's main activities until Level 4 consist of running away from combat, attacking from ambush only, and fumbling every roll they make.

The combat and task resolution system is equally simple and elegant. All actions are resolved by rolling a d20 under the appropriate skill or characteristic to succeed. The gunfights are quick and fairly deadly - being struck by a bullet,

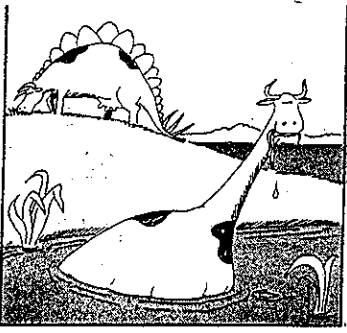
even from a derringer, is likely to cripple your character or even kill them outright. This is a welcome change from the "indestructible character" systems TSR is famous for, notably AD&D. I particularly, however, like the melee and fisticuffs rules; they have a fine set of tables detailing the effects of uppercuts, haymakers, kicks, and head butts, and a very good system for handling situations like firing a gun in combat or attacking someone with bare hands when they have a knife or similar weapon, two instances which are rarely covered satisfactorily in roleplaying systems. It also has a useful addendum in the form of an 'Advanced Combat System', for handling duels ("Draw, Pardner"), sniping, dynamite, and heavy weapons fire (gatling guns and cannon).

About half the book is taken up with background, which is also welcome, but unfortunately a large chunk of this is wasted on lists of the stats of famous characters, both historical and fictional, from the Western genre: Billy the Kid, Wild Bill Hickok, The Good, Bad and Ugly, Hopalong Cassidy, and so on. A lot more could be profitably donated to background instead of these useless reams of cold data. In Boot Hill's defence, though, it provides Judges (DMs - nice touch, guys) with a complete, pregenerated western town, and associated adventures.

All in all, I find this a most purchasable product (assuming it's still in print). I know of 2 modules for it (The Lost Conquistador Mine and Mad Mesa), both of which are in the CLAW library.

And so, to all those interested in adventures on the prairie badlands of the Western Territories, I say "Hoss up, compadres; let's make sure we're a-drinkin' in the tap-rooms of sweet Abilene by nightfall."





Sixty-five million years ago, when cows ruled the earth

Notices

Announcement: The SHEEP UPRISING has begun! No more shall we be seen as walking meat!

Award: An attractive red jersey, to anyone missing Andy's games from not on (Gulp! -Ed)

Notice: Bullet-riddled, out-of-fuel seaplanes with only one float do not land too well. Happy swimming, Sam and Co.

Alex: Pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis. Fuck you! Love, Lara.

Notice: "Austin! There are no Greys in the refridgerator!" "They're not inside, they're on top... oops..."

Old Man Whateley - Not only did you suck, you tasted bad too. From Lupe.

Wanted: Da breakfast for da piggyschnells (schnells?)!!

Wanted: New boyfriend. Must have complete lack of wierd-looking, gun-toting friends who smell like gasoline. Irish heritage a bonus. Applications, with reasonable photo to Advertiser 11.

MacBaine, MacBaine... where the hell are you when we need you?

Notice: SAGA still blow goats. Still have photographic proof.

Retired: Ralph Tamuka Muraau. Ebola- Fine. AIDS - fine. Terrorists - fine. Living oil - not fine. Last seen donning a grass skirt and heading for Samoa.

To the crew of the Haya Sosa Maru - heads up, suckers! This one's for Pearl Harbour (in advance).

Notice: To Kim. Zygots ahoy!

Wanted: Prizes! Sniff, Sulk.

Notice: Bananas are a herb.

Bon Voyage, Cara!

Spotted: Scotsman in turban and loincloth donning the blixem out of Deep One hybrids. Film at Eleven. (A spotted scot? -Ed)

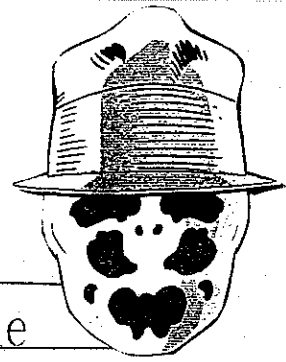
Notice: Lambda Yellow cleanup team, about to be cleaned up. Eat H&K, you bastards!

Wanted: Cosmetician after LARPS. Bring own chisel for mascara.

Cerdic and Meliora up in a tree, kay-eye-ess-ess-eye-en-gee!

Notice: Crowe is a winghead. Like, totally. (Who says? -Ed)

"Whateleyburgers hit the spot! Full of maggot-seeping rot!" Open now at a Dunwich near you.



For Sale

For Sale: One pair trousers. One careful owner. Apply to Agent Casey, San Carlos, Nevada.

25 Fortune Cookies: Discounted for sale. Slightly toasted. All contain the same fortune.

For Sale: One basketball. Self dribbling, several other bonus features. Best stored underwater (damn pesky tracking devices!). Enquiries to nearest MIB.

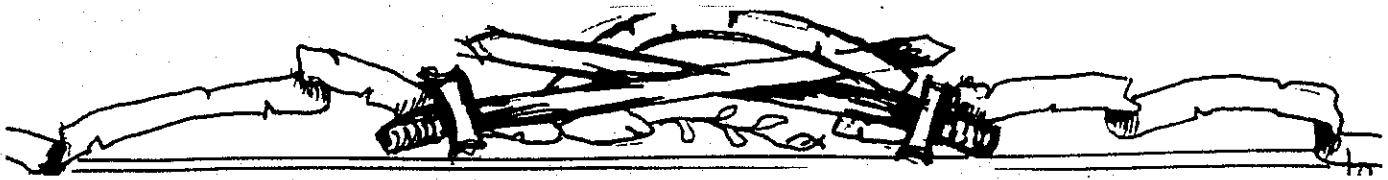
Single-Prop seaplane. Perfect for buzzing insanely well-armed tramp steamers. Will trade for life raft in good condition.

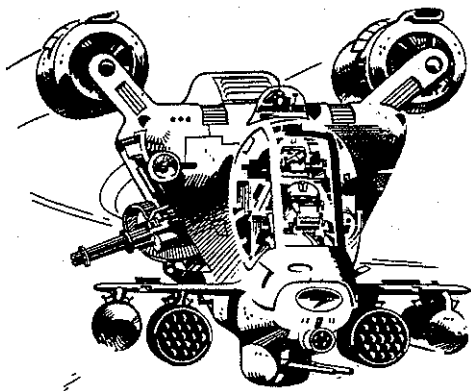
For Sale: One safe house in picturesque Dunwich. Good condition, ideally situated, very close to home of undead wizard thing. Only a few blood marks remaining. Apply to FBI Offices, Washington.

For Sale: Phone-box concession in Chinatown. Previous owner got on the wrong side of Doc, and some hot lead. (Hippocratic Oath, my butt!)

For Sale: Sheep, at a loss. Well - maybe not... RUN!!!!

Found: Confusing Crime Scene. Anyone with information as to how some clumsy PI managed to spill lighter fluid over 3 seperate desks and then carelessly ignite it, please contact the Anchorage Police Department.





R. I. P

Two 12-th level Blood Cause mages, dropped in their tracks by Cold Bolts. Ha-ha! PS Sorry Mr Innocent Bystander...

RIP: Kyle Dante. Ring, ring, hello, double-tap to the head. All alone, with only the Basketball to save you - the MIBs are not your friends...

Giant Porcupine: None can withstand the Brothers of Light, even if two of them did fall off their horses in suprise.

Paolo Sanchez: A friendly who saw too much.

RIP (almost): Uriel, who thinks it's cool to cast (and fumble) his Float spells **after** he's jumped off the cliff.

Junior: Furry little horned polar bear thingy, beloved pet of the walker in the wastes. You will be avenged.

Doctors Barrow, Warren and Paine, more innocents who got too close to The Truth.

RIP: Hoy. You were too clueless to live, but at least you died with some guts (and what guts they were...). From Tango Six.

Lost At Sea: The Haya Sosa Maru (Spirit of the North Wind). So much for that explosive cargo and those fuel tanks in the stern. Another victim of Vinnie's Zippo.

RIP (almost): Delta Green Teams L and G. Tony, VX Gas is **not** used as underarm deoderant, even if you did find it in a gym locker.

One Elvish Demon: Thanks for the six foot sword old chap. The Brothers of Light.

RIP: Half of Chinatown's Tongs - Vinnie was most unwilling to part with his \$1, and **really** had to make that call...

RIP: Lots of ARVNs, as well as a few patriotic, if slightly ill-starred, Viet Cong. The side with the bullets coming out is not the best side of an M60 to be on.

RIP: Troubleshooter Team **DELETED. DELETED** while in search of a **DELETED DELETED** in **DELETED** Complex. Rest in **DELETED**. Serve the Computer!

RIP: The nefarious ICON bug. (Sigh) If only all traditions involved this much mucus...

Scrap: Doc's .357, after a long and rather bizarre career. "Throw a pistol at him? You must be crazy!". Currently frightening Arctic fish.

RIP: Sergeant Jason Ritter. Died for the cause, defending his companions against an animated oil-slick. Last words: "It's been real".

RIP: Llewellyn's bow. Also R the Dragon, with said bow, so

Retired to a sunny villa in Bulgaria: Lord Benthis of Aghieru. Somehow fitting that creations outlasted, if not outlived, him.

RIP: Vasily and Frank, two (v) incompetent and unlucky gunslingers. Gone to Boot Hill.

One Commie Assault Bot; crisped by accurate, loyal citizen Miles-Y-DER-2. Oops, sorry Mission Leader!

Not-RIP: To those who think Agent Dale "Red" Andrews can be killed - THINK AGAIN, FUCKERS!!

Nearly-RIP: Dr Fergus Kane, Dr Bottle, aka The Mobster. We knew you'd survive that little scuffle in Dunwich. Good to still have you around.

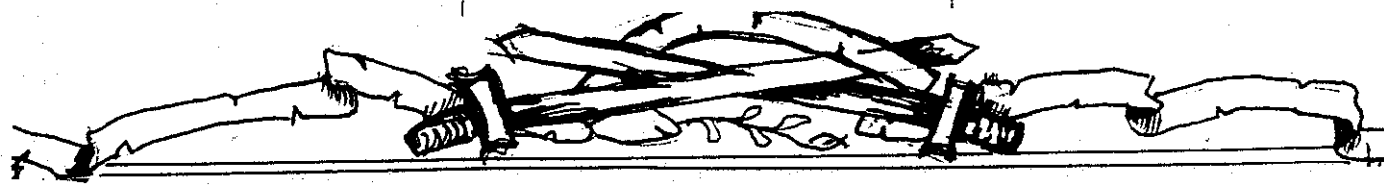
Maybe-RIP : Special Agent K. Dante, FBI. If you're dead, we'll miss you - but we'll miss our basketball more.

Doc Ocular, plunging to a watery grave. Ho-ho.

Quotes

Michael: "We're dead!"
"Rope": "If we're lucky..."
- Delta Green

Ellis: "You - do you speak ancient Mayan?"
- Zombies playtest





the end

