

ISSUE
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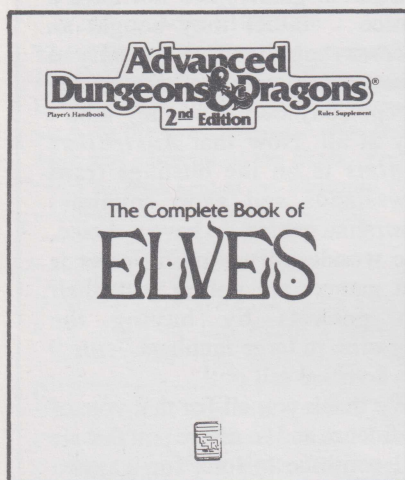
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Reviews

THE COMPLETE BOOK OF ELVES

AD&D 2nd Edition Sourcebook
by TSR RRP \$30.00

Reviewed by Brad Smart



The new TSR handbook is the long awaited Complete Book of Elves, containing all that you did and didn't want to know about the pointy eared gits. The book answers those oft asked questions such as; do elves sleep and what do they do if they don't so that they won't run around when the poor humans and others have to, and where do elves go when they die, they don't they just go on holiday - forever!

The Book of Elves includes descriptions of the general attitudes and characteristics of all AD&D 2nd Edition elves, along with a family tree showing how they are inter-related. With the advent of Spelljammer, all seven AD&D campaign worlds can be considered linked, however tenuously. Unfortunately these descriptions of the various elven sub-races are too short for my liking, providing little additional information over what is set out in the individual campaign source books. The vast majority of the information on elven life, society, attitudes, culture and legends is useful only to players in generic 'standard' AD&D campaigns. Great for those that wish to flesh out the role playing of elven characters in these campaigns, but I found it useless for an elf in say a Dark Sun world, where attitudes and environment are so totally different that much of what is presented here becomes irrelevant.

So what is in this book? Presentation is as per the previous books in the series. As usual, the colour plates are a pleasure to look at (even if we have seen them all before), but the black & white illustrations, following in the style of the other handbooks, are generally very bland. The typeface is big and the margins generous.

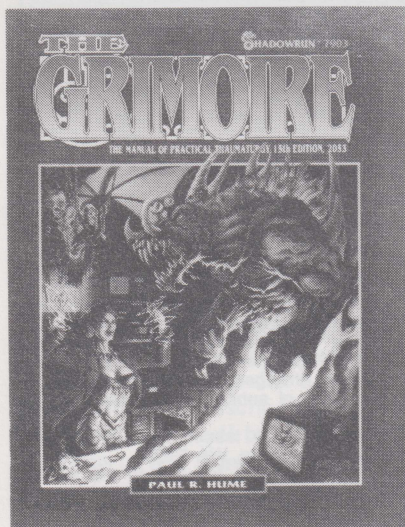
The 128 page book is divided into thirteen chapters including a lot of new material - Optional Rules, Character Kits, Elven Equipment and Elven Magic. These are a mixed bag, but unless playing in a specialised campaign will need to be introduced to even the balance with the other 'optional' rules in the rest of the handbook family. One of the Character Kits, the Bladesinger resonates with distant echoes of another elven class in another highly popular game. And hidden amongst the magic items is another time bomb waiting to explode in your campaign - Artificial Limbs. These inventions are almost cyberware and are set to turn the already powerful PC race into unstoppable Robo-Elves! "Come quietly, orc, or else there will be trouble."

Compared with the other handbooks, The Complete Book of Elves holds it's own, but does not stand out, useful for elf players, and those who buy every release, but otherwise read someone else's.

THE GRIMOIRE

Shadowrun 2nd Edition Sourcebook
by FASA RRP \$29.95

Reviewed by Malcolm Adler



The Grimoire is the only book for Shadowrun second edition that is being reworked. The main reason why the book has been rewritten is due to the fact that the foundations of the first edition of the book now form the basic magic system of Shadowrun 2nd edition. The new edition of the Grimoire carries a lot of the same information as the first, but it's been cleared up and greatly improved, in alignment with the core rules. Many of the topics covered have been developed and refined presenting Shadowrunners everywhere with more choice and danger than ever before.

The book is a hefty 144 pages filled with black and white art and colour plates, some of which are very good. Mind you, much of the artwork, even the layout is a straight reproduction of the first edition version. I guess this saved on production time, and doesn't really offend as it is the new text which we are interested in. Overall, the presentation is fine and the value for money can't be argued with.

While a glance at the contents page will show many of the same titles as the first edition, read those chapters thoroughly as the information has been further detailed and clarified. Many new topics are covered and an eight page spell directory at the back of the book gives new ammunition for mages. The book also includes information from the London Sourcebook and the Universal Brotherhood pack which details Druids and Insect Spirits. Other subjects

covered are general background essays on the effect magic has had on society in 2054AD, Initiation, Geasa, Magical Groups, Beings, Allies, Watchers, Free Spirits, Places (Astral Space), Magical Threats, Spell Design and the Directory.

I suppose many of you who have the first edition are waiting for me to say whether you should invest your cash in the second edition, I think I can only say that you don't really have a choice. It is worth getting as it is reasonably priced, you won't be disappointed. As the book explains, the return of magic is very recent, people are busily exploring, experimenting and discovering new ways all the time. A revised Grimoire makes sense. The book also contains interesting sections on new totems, prominent mages in the field and important organisations. You should bear in mind that FASA is only updating The Grimoire, so you're not going to be forced into the position of having to repurchase any other first edition sourcebooks.

It is good to see that FASA is not out to rip off its customers with reissued rules for the new edition, which no doubt was at the very least a temptation. The only complaint I can make is that it would have been better to have *more* new material in The Grimoire. For existing players, this release of The Grimoire is a satisfying expansion of the Shadowrun second edition, for new players it is pretty much essential reading.

HITTING THE HARDCORE

Walking With Your Head in The Clouds.

HOL!

An occasional **Shadowrun** column
By Malcolm Adler.

Fellow Runners. In this irregular column we will discuss the latest street happenings in 2054AD. From the general to the specialised, news and ways to abuse. This issue we're talking *info-ovo's*. So follow.

In sprawls across the globe Corp ritz kids, street glitter boys, techno brides and more meet at one off locations to let loose.

This is the Youth Movement, the latest '*fad*' among the rich, '*rebellion*' among the middle class and '*cry of anguish*' for the masses of the streets. Ritz beside Runner, Pimp and Whore, this is the final score.

The Youth Movement is the latest thing in the hard and fast culture of 2054. It is centred around wild communal simsense gatherings called *Info-Ovos*, in which audio, trideo, sims, BTL's, live rockers and pyrotechnics are all used to blast the senses of the '*Goer*'. These one off venues are bedecked in lighting, speakers, sub woofers, screens and a thousand other curiosities. The point of the event is the immersion of one self in information, and thus the name **Information Ov(o)erload**. They are viewed by many as some sort of matrix simulation, an attempt to make the unreal real. In short - *escapism*. Others believe it is just an avenue to dump BTL chips by dealers. Both of these are true to various degrees. The Info-Ovo's are certainly full of Chippers and the end of the event always sees fatalities among the chip heads.

Violence is not common at such events, well organised security is visibly present (supplied by the BTL dealers). This security force makes its own rules and while not usually causing unwarranted trouble they are artists of intimidation.

An entry fee is paid at the door, ranging from 50 Nuyen to 150 Nuyen, while expensive much is within...

Amid such an environment of cluttered sounds, lights, structures and thousands of people it is very easy to do business. Using the barrage of sensations as cover, deals can be done, people tagged, followed, abducted, and even assassinated with many of the Goer's (the majority of which are the bored sons and daughters of wage slaves from Corp sanctuaries) being oblivious, due to their state of mind.

Typical gatherings are held in abandoned warehouses, office blocks and other large spaces. Such events are very underground, gathering anywhere between one and fifty thousand people in the one place. Such events draw a crowd in comparison to what is on offer. A full production would have the latest in lighting, sound, chips, entertainments (usually of a sideshow and gladiatorial variety) and bands. The size of the crowd will be as many as five thousand per million people in the sprawl. It is at such events that Corp ritz-kids first start to experience the real world. Tasting danger, the criminal and shadow worlds. Many become prey for dark elements at such gatherings, but this is all part of the thrill of being there.

The truth of the matter is that such events are free for all. While security and calm is a strong force and usually retained this is not a place that Lone Star is going to enter, even Doc Wagon™ has left clients to their fate (of course it depends on their colour of coverage, Plats always get picked up).

Many Corps have picked up on the drawing power of Info-Ovo's, recognising the 'in' nature of the events. They prepare specially labled lines of products which with careful marketing is sold on the sprawls as an independent "street" lable, giving it street



cred. Many lines of clothing, music and sim-chips are available to capture the young market. This is a bandwagon that the Corps are jumping on, to a further degree, it seems to be a by product of the very world the Corps have created, as some have put it:

"They can now label, package and sell their own waste!"

This is indeed what they are doing, media hype-stars launch vocal careers at the occasional 'sanctioned' gathering, where the Corp organises and secures the Info-Ovo. Such an event is an ideal time for a *snatch and grab* style operation to relocate a willing client to a new Corp, as they always take place outside of the more secure sections of town. Such operations face more opposition from the large mindless crowd than from the paranoid Corps who while running the show can't really be said to be in complete control. Corp sponsored events are often targets for street gangs who work over the crowd for chip dealers and other less savoury characters, feeling that they are not with a *true* street crowd, and therefore having no second thoughts about taking advantage of the *plastic* people at the event.

While somewhat of a phenomenon the gatherings are part of the ever evolving global subculture. Some point back to similar events that have occurred in past youth culture. Suggesting the Info-Ovo is just 2050's version of the 1970's rock festivals, the 1980's Warehouse parties, the 1990's Raves, 2010's French Trance-alongs, the 30's Korean Shocks and the 40's Laced fad, which saw music and magic merged into a *charming* experience, until banned by all national governments.

Whether a fad or a foundation the Info-Ovo is an integral part of the Youth Movement in '54. The events are constantly evolving. As things get grittier on the street the gatherings take on a rougher tone, filtering into such events via music, setting and chips. The innocence of youth (Corp youth in anycase) is no longer safe, perhaps it is just a reflection of the dark times we live in.

Wakarimasu-ka?

NEWS

Arnie's Back

Leading Edge are about to unleash a swag of product tie-ins to the *Terminator 2* movie. There are two board games, a role playing game and a host of miniatures scheduled for release in the near future. Asta la vista, baby!

Dan Simmons

The Hugo Award winning author of *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion* is due to visit Australia from 2 to 7 March to promote his new releases - *The Hollow Man* and *children of the Night*. You can catch up with Dan at the **National Word Festival** in Canberra 5 to 7 March.

SwanCon

SwanCon 18 is on for the Easter weekend, 8-12 April at the Ascot Convention Centre down on the Swan River. Although primarily a science fiction and fantasy fiction 'Con with Guest of Honour including **Terry Pratchett** and **Robert Jordan**, SwanCon does cater for role players and others with AD&D, freeforms, tabletop games and Japanese Anime. Contact SwanCon PO Box 318, Nedlands, WA 6009.

Conquest '93

Conquest '93 is happening at Melbourne University High School over the Easter weekend. This is a full on role playing convention - so if you live in Melbourne and want to know more, contact David on (03) 874 1890 or else ask at your local games store for details. If all goes well, and his car holds together, *Australian Realms* will be represented at Conquest by Glenn Oakes.

White Wolf

The twisted folk from Georgia, have been grinding out releases for their Storyteller games. First of the Clan sourcebooks, *Brujah*, is now available; 70+ pages of blood curdling facts, spray paint and artwork for Vampire. *Children of the Inquisition* is an art format sourcebook for Vampire, featuring several archetypical bloodsuckers from Dracula to Dominique. Ars Magica fans are not forgotten, *The Maleficium* is a diabolist's sourcebook complete with disclaimers that this material is not 'real' but is sure to scare the pants of your mum anyway!

Something intriguing that we know **White Wolf** have been working on is a large scale Vampire game called *The Masquerade* which they have been play testing with up to one hundred players at a time. This is due for release in May 93.

Support Our Advertisers

We've mentioned this before, but if you can, please support our advertisers, and when you do patronise their services, don't forget to mention where you heard about them - in *Australian Realms*. Your supporting them reinforces their desire to support us which helps us service your needs. Makes sense, huh? One of our regular advertisers, **Paper Tiger Games** has asked us to tell the readers that he has a couple of pending startups for his PBM - **Gang City**. As Bryn says "Nice cheap game, fixed turn fees, upright, solid, moral moderator, blood, violence, etc. What more could you ask for?"

Aphelion Publications

In keeping with our pledge to keep you informed about Australian made products, here is some interesting news. *Aphelion Publications*, a credentialed group of authors based in Adelaide led by Terry Dowling, have teamed up with a mysterious group calling themselves *MSS Gaming* to produce a series of game book novels set in *MSS* as yet unseen game world - *Galaxy*. We'll give you more information as it becomes available. In the meantime, you can contact *Aphelion* at PO Box 619 North Adelaide SA 5006.

The Great LRP Story

Remember in last issue's *Dice Are Dead* we told you Glenn would be covering Australia's biggest LRP event - *The Shadow League Summer Festival* - well it didn't eventuate. Not the event, that was a great success we hear, but Glenn's story. Unfortunately, Glenn's transport was smashed from under him when some yuppie company director in a very expensive car crashed into Glenn just before the long weekend. Glenn is unharmed, but his car was off the road for a few days.

As we say, the event went well, a good turnout and plenty of exciting, exhausting, Live Role Play action. And to top it all, some real life drama - the site was hit by lightning after everyone went home, burning the 'tavern' to the ground!

Snow! Fire! Flood!

It must be something in the stars at the moment, everybody is having strange accidents. FASA's Jill Lucas tells us that early in the morning of January 10th, when all good FASA employees were home dreaming about their beautiful new offices, a fire broke out. In the water tank on the roof. During a snowstorm. Yes, it sounds silly, right up to the part where the fire

department had to punch a hole in the water tank to keep it from toppling, and several thousand gallons of water flooded FASA's art department and several of their offices. That is why they lost our address, and why this issue's cover almost didn't arrive here on time. Thankfully no-one was hurt. Thanks to Jill and the team at FASA for the Mechwarrior art. Next issue we will be going back to using original art - a fantasy cover.

New Releases

TSR - Creative Campaigning is another handbook in the *Dungeon Master Guide* series. A 'How To' book for AD&D referees. Who needs it? *Assassin Mountain* is an *Al-Qadim* sourcebook with three adventures. *Krynnspace* takes *Spelljammer* into the *Dragonlance* setting and Carl Sargent's *The Marklands* should please the World of Greyhawk diehards. **R.Talsorian** - *Agents of Falkenberg* for Cyberpunk. **Games Workshop** has the *Empire Army Book* out now. **Ral Partha** is releasing a boxed set of 20 AD&D monster miniatures. **GDW** are working on a boxed city set - *Ascalon* - for *Mythus* along with a much needed *Bestiary* for the same game. **Jedko Games** has released the soft cover Australian print run of *Shadowrun 2nd Edition* and it is selling very quickly.

FASA's Battletech releases in March are *Ideal War* (a novel), *BattleMechs* - the plastic models as per the 3rd Edition rules boxed separately, and the *Intelligence Operations Handbook*. There's also a couple of *Shadowrun* products ready to hit the streets, namely *Paranormal Animals of Europe* and later on, the *Tir Tairngire* sourcebook. Get into 'em, chummer.

New Assistant Art Editor

Gary Morton, a promising artist from Adelaide whose designs have been sculpted by **Inquisition Miniatures** has been appointed to the position of Assistant Art Editor. Gary is one of several staff who we plan to introduce to you in a number of staff profiles - for more information check out Lip Service on page 25.

Gargoyle

The first issue of the *Subscribers Only Fanzine*, *Gargoyle*, has gone out with this issue of *Australian Realms* to all subscribers. It contains, amongst other things, additional *Unae* material and the Andrew Daniels A-Team scripts as well as more rpg coverage. This fanzine will slowly grow in pages but remain an irregular offering. If you want to receive *Gargoyle* all you have to do is fill out the Subscription Form on page 43, write out a cheque and post both to us.

Final Words

Well that's all for issue 10, folks. Until next time...

... See ya 'round like a d100!