

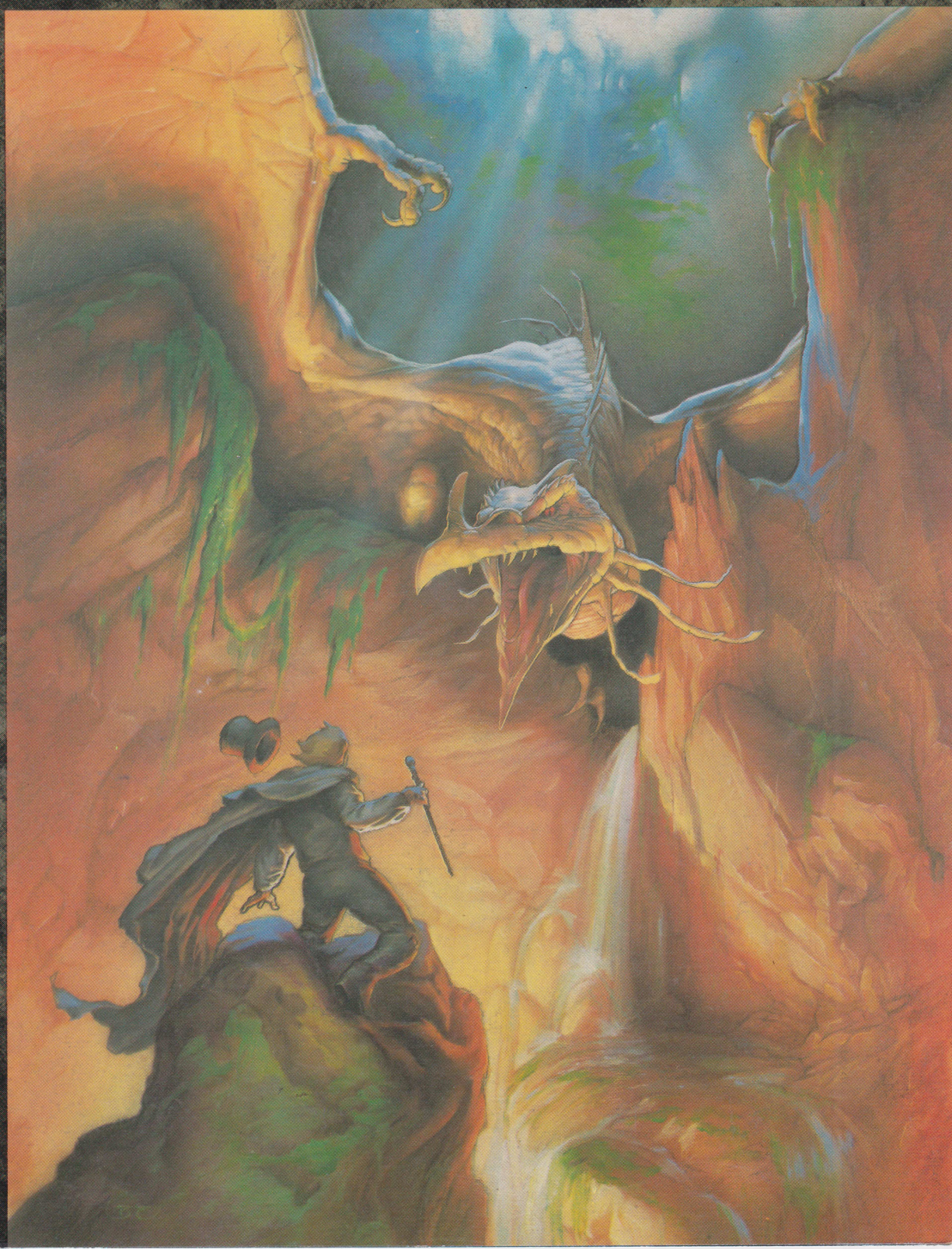
ISSUE
14

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REALMS

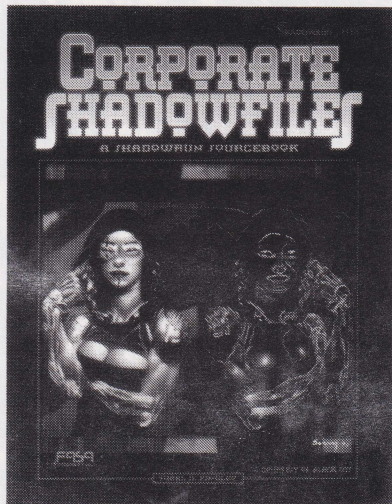
- PBM SPECIAL EDITION
- EARTHDAWN
- DARK SUN
- CYBERPUNK
- BATTLETECH
- UNAE



CORPORATE SHADOWFILES

Shadowrun Sourcebook
by FASA

Reviewed by Colin Taber



Corporate Shadowfiles is a release I personally had no fixed feelings about when I first read about it on a release schedule. Sure, it sounds useful, but it also sounds like a potential bore; generally speaking business, especially in corporate boardrooms, is a dry, efficient and colourless world. By simple definition not an ideal place for role playing games.

That view has been somewhat changed after reading this sourcebook, the end result looks good, and is good. I'll even stretch my vocabulary on this one and say *great*. This release does what a lot of other dark-future-type products have failed to do, that is bring some depth to the Megacorp villains of near future game worlds. Sure, books have said *this* and *that* before, but they've never explained why or shown how corps are bad, they've just said that they are, marking them all as clichés.

Modern Mordors.

Corporate Shadowfiles changes this, it explains how megacorps came about and also details the extent of their powers. This is one of those books that tells you what you *need* to know instead of *what* you already know.

The product comes in at well over 120 pages and has a 32 glossy colour section at the back profiling the eight biggest megacorps (one profile appeared in issue 12 of *Realms*, that was of Saeder-Krupp).

The book has sections dealing with how megacorps handle business, marketing, and how

they control of the world of 2055. The book also covers competition, takeovers, the Zurich Orbital, the Corporate Court and perhaps most importantly corporate war. All of this information is smattered with *shadowtalk* which provides some worthwhile hooks and suggestions. **Shadowfiles** also covers the historical and contemporary angles that are relevant to the topics covered. Well thought out and executed, this material is quality stuff.

In short, I simply cannot recommend this highly enough. The book looks good, feels good and has enough detailed information to make it stand out. If you are a Shadowrun gamer and feel that you could do with some extra depth to your campaign I strongly suggest you make this purchase.



DEEP SPACE

Cyberpunk sourcebook
by R. Talsorian Games

Reviewed by Paul Mitting



R. Talsorian have done themselves proud with this supplement. It has got to be one of the best written and easily absorbed adventure and rules packs I've encountered. It is intended to replace the earlier *Near Orbit* sourcebook, and includes whole new rules sections.

The supplement starts with an overview of the history and background of what's happened in space and who's been doing it. Details of the planets in the Solar system and the Asteroid Belt are concise and user friendly, with info on what the world is like and what colonisation and facilities there are.

One section of the book that really stood out for me was the section relating to the environment in space. It revolves around the so-called Triad of ARG - that's Air, Radiation and Gravity to you dirtsiders. Provided is some of the best blending of physical fact with roleplaying ease I have seen in a game. To be honest, if you want to get a great summary of the hazards and challenges of life in space, read **Deep Space**. It is a rare roleplaying product indeed that educates as well as entertains!

Extensive stats and drawings accompany sections on space travel (which as yet does not include an interstellar drive), artificial habitats, combat and equipment. One of the difficulties your ground based characters are going to face is that their hard won street skills, and combat experience on the ground count for nought in Zero-Gee. Fire a big gun in space and you're

likely to slam into the bulkhead behind you from the recoil whilst the slug punctures the bulkhead opposite - then the real trouble starts as the air and everything in it (you too, bucko) gets sucked out into the freezing cold vacuum of space. Guns are illegal on space transports - solos are advised to leave them at home and bring a knife.

The rules for ship combat and movement are again a marvellous blend of realism and playability. One word on ship combat - the ships are VERY expensive so think twice before you plug one. You may have to pay for it later.

Scenario-wise, the book provides very lengthy and intensive campaign set on one of the Mars colonies. Not as violent as *Total Recall*, but then that's left a lot up to your players. The scenario read's well, but it is a long term adventure (you're characters are going to be out in space for at least 3 years!) so you may want to consider some satellite busting for shorter term fun.

Overall, I can wholeheartedly endorse **Deep Space**. It's loaded with good common sense rules, reliable information, interesting adventure hooks aplenty, neat illustrations and is well written to boot.

If you want to get your Cyberpunk game into some real high adventure, buy this sucker now!

The Red Line of Reality

An Examination of Security Challenges For Your Runners
By Malcolm Adler

The following article discusses simple security methods used to help frustrate those who would overcome them, ie. your players. While most are very simple, and indeed many in use even today they are often ignored in Shadowrun due to the referee not being aware of them, or just not being confident about the method of operation. Ways of using several 'simple alarms' more effectively are detailed below, many of the devices mentioned are covered in the *Neo-Anarchists Guide to Real Life*.

SILENT ALARMS

Few referees seem to appreciate the beauty of a silent alarm. Look at the adjacent illustration and you will see an example of security which 'tells' the trespasser that they are detected. Great, this is entirely to the runners benefit, not the person or organisation that is having its security breached. The only benefit in a visible or audible alarm is that it might scare away the perpetrator (yes, it can also alert security staff, but so can communicators). Sure, in this case I don't think Mr Cute is going to care if he's set off the alarms or not. Chances are, with an attitude like his he is just going to proceed regardless of how many sirens sound, bells ring and lights flash.

So, what are the benefits of a silent alarm? Well, Mr Cute could potentially have one hell of a surprise when he continues on his way eventually stumbling into an organised security force ambush. This is the advantage of a silent alarm, it gives the defender the potential to wrestle back the element of surprise. When you are talking about gun fights this is an advantage that can be helpful, when speaking of "releasing the hell hounds" it can be invaluable.

VISUAL LOCKS

Another stumper can be an old fashioned lock. Great, have a magnetic lock, a card reader and key pad as part of a doors security routine. That'll be just fine until a decker comes along. A nice *manual* lock, or even bar to physically disable the door will stop a decker using telling the electronic system to disengage. While not all doors would have such 'basic' fail-safe, last-resort type physical locks, doors that lead to the outside might. If the door was worth spending thousand of ¥ on in the first place to strengthen and jig up



with mag locks, why wouldn't a corp spend an extra 50¥ to fit a brace, chain lock, or dead lock. Something which may at least slow the unauthorised entrance to a facility by *foreign* personnel.

CYCLES & ROUTINES

All security (at least while a {meta}human element is involved) runs in cycles. Even a "Random Routine System" will still have a pattern within it (it will be just harder to find). Such cycles are the weakest part of any security system, you don't have to wait for the changing of the shift, there are other weak spots in a cycle. Perhaps at ten each night John Citizen, Security goon goes to the bathroom, the tea room to get a soyakaf, flicks through the paper, the fire escape stairwell to have a smoke. Any number of simple things that any (meta)human may do because nature, laziness or wants call. For example John and Jack's routine patrol takes them through the mall at nine each night. They report in, and on the way out have their regular competition on 'Mario VIII', then pick up a juice at the deli before heading to the tube station. Here is a window of between five and ten minutes that runners can capitalise on.

To map a routine all your players need to do is watch. People are creatures of habit, if your players don't want to watch someone for a week or so, chances are someone else already has like the mall punks or a street drunk. Perhaps the information is for sale.

(META)HUMANITY

Above all the biggest bonus on the players side when they are trying to beat security is that (meta)humanity makes mistakes. We can't help it. The counter side of this is that the players are up against (mentally) at least their equal. A security captain is a cunning man, and if he knows your coming you can bet he is not going to sit still and wait.

Next issue a scenario for Shadowrun, set in Colin Taber's *official* Australian setting: The **Stranglehold** awaits.

NEWS

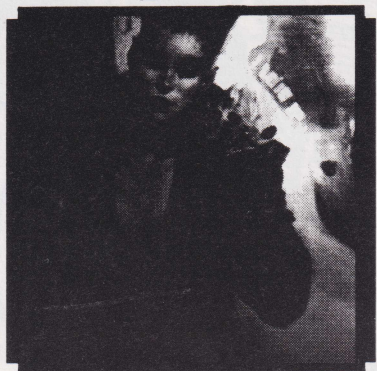
New Releases

With Christmas around the corner, there is plenty of new goodies for your stocking;

TSR

More **AD&D 2nd Edition** for the legion of fans of this most popular of gaming systems. These include the latest in the *Player's Handbook* supplement series - *The Complete Ranger's Handbook*. For the rejuvenated *Forgotten Realms* campaign setting there is the *Player's Guide to Forgotten Realms*, and for Krynn referees there's the imminent release of the *Dragonlance Book of Lairs*. Finally, *The Elves of Athas* is set to make a very welcome appearance for the most interesting of the **AD&D** settings - *Dark Sun*.

TÍR NA NÓG



FASA Corporation

If you bought the *Mercenary's Handbook* for **Battletech** then you'll be happy to discover **FASA** have printed some errata sheets to fix the wrong Combat Values in the back of the book. Also out soon for the Clans is *Luthien*, a scenario pack which details an entire campaign for the capital planet of the Draconis Combine. For 'advanced' *Shadowrun* players there's an adventure to accompany the *Tir na nOg* source book. *Celtic Double Cross* has Irish elves delving into American politics.

More details to hand for the *Barsaive Campaign Set* for **Earthdawn**. This boxed set includes cards depicting many of the treasures and creatures found in Barsaive, a poster sized map of the land, a comprehensive guide to the setting, and a book for the GM so he can flesh out his **Earthdawn** campaign.

R.Talsorian

Castle Falkenstein will be out before Christmas. From Lisa's description it sounds like a real beauty - innovative design, heaps of colour art (see our cover this issue for an example of what you can expect from Bill Eaken), and text that focuses on background instead of the rules, all packaged in a format that would not look out of place on a coffee table. For **Cyberpunk** players the new release, *Cybergeneration* is now available.

Chaosium

Pendragon enters its fourth edition with the inclusion of a new Celtic magic system (to be reviewed in issue 15) and is supported by a new supplement, *Pagan Shores* detailing the mysterious realms of Arthuric Ireland. Collectors of gaming merchandise will be on the look out for the latest **Cthulhu** T-shirt with *Miskatonic University* logo.

Palladium

Rifts moves into new dimensions with the release of *Rifts Dimensions Book One: Wormwood*. Sounds like a fun place to adventure - "filthy, decadent, violent and deadly environment ruled by maniacal dictators...". Also for **Rifts**, closer to Christmas, look out for *World Book Five: Triax & The NGR* which looks set to unleash Bavarian industrialism on the world with a host of new robots, power armour, cyborgs, weapons, and vehicles. Talking about heavy ordnance, **Palladium's** *Compendium of Contemporary Weapons* is also due for release with over 400 weapons, 20 armoured vehicles, explosives, armour and special equipment all of which is compatible with all **Palladium** games.

CanCon 94

Situated at Copland College, Melba, ACT over the weekend of Jan 21 to 23, 1994, **CanCon** is acknowledged as *the* national wargaming, boardgaming and roleplaying event on the Australian Convention calendar. There is a heavy roleplaying focus at the Con these days with the **RPGA**, and some of the country's leading roleplay scenario writers involved. For miniatures and war game players there's the annual **Ancients and Boardgames Championships**. Add to this several freeforms, demonstration games, a traders hall and a dinner and you have to ask yourself "Why won't I be there?".

Well if you need any further excuse, **Australian Realms** will also be there!

We'll be extending our special on issues 1 to 12 for \$32.00, have issue 15 on sale, plus some other exciting stuff, so come along and have a chat with us - oh, and if anyone knows of a decent Indian takeaway

close to the College, please drop us a line!

For **CanCon 94** information contact Noel Bugeia (06) 251 4076 or Wes Nicholson (06) 259 1914 between 7pm and 10pm Monday to Friday.



A-Team Book

The **A-Team** book is currently under construction. Scheduled for release in the first half of 1994 it will include previously unreleased material from Andrew and Scott. If you want to be ahead of the pack, to have the book delivered to your door weeks before it is available in the shops, with a discount, send a stamped self-addressed envelope. When the book is ready to print we will send an order form straight out to you so you can reserve your copy as there will be a limited production run.



Where All Good Orcs Go Shopping...

There are a number of specialist games shops around the nation who support **Australian Realms**. We'd like to return the favour by asking our readers to think carefully next time they make a gaming purchase. If you can manage it, consider making that purchase at a shop that stocks **Australian Realms**; that shop is supporting local products... please support them.

... See ya 'round like a d100!