

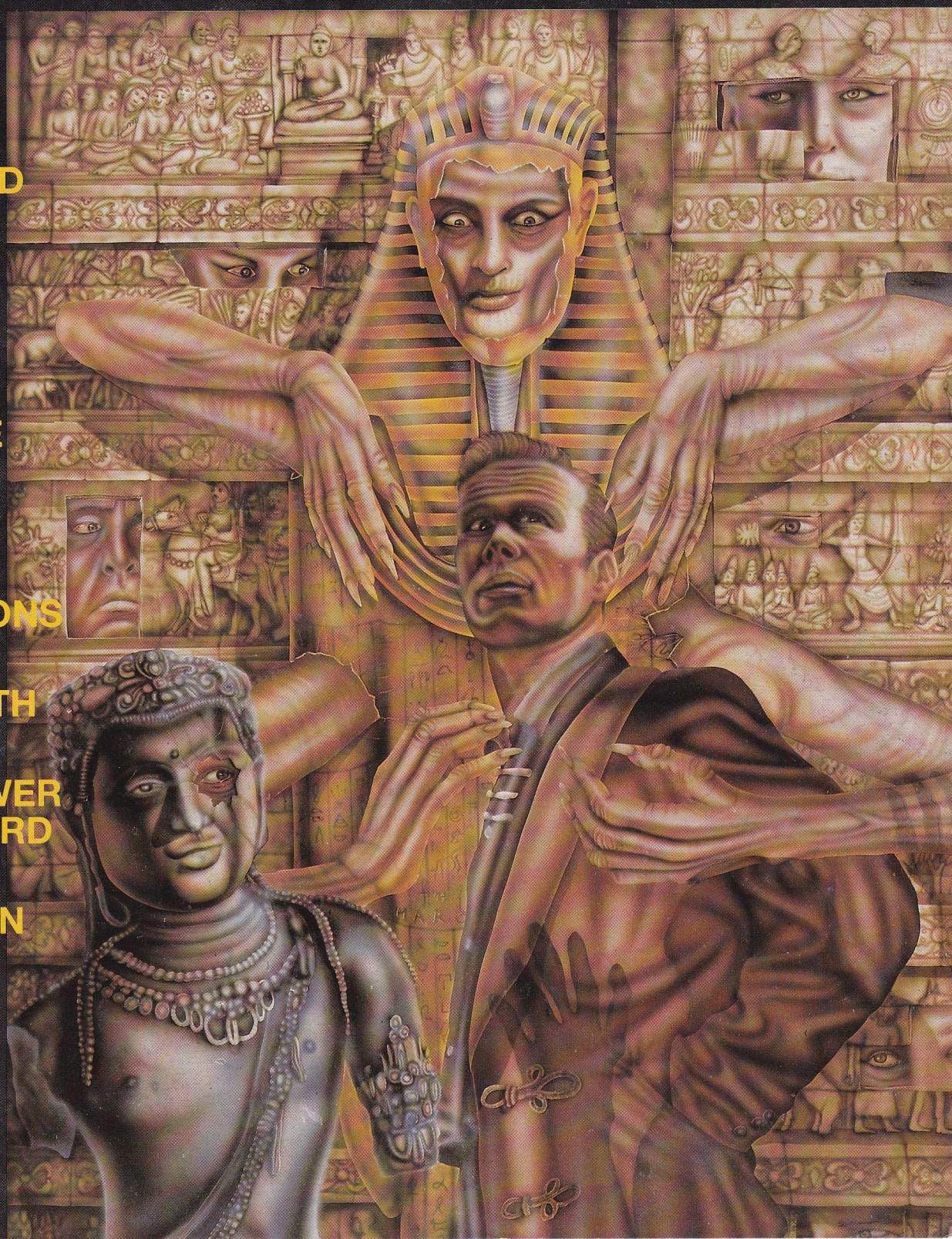
ISSUE
19

A·U·S·T·R·A·L·I·A·N

PRICE
\$4.95

REALMS

- AD&D's ED GREENWOOD
- MAGIC VS SPELLFIRE
- HORROR ADVENTURE
- VAMPIRE
- DIY DUNGEONS
- BLACK DEATH
- UNAE: ANSWER FROM OSSARD
- SHADOWRUN AUSTRALIA



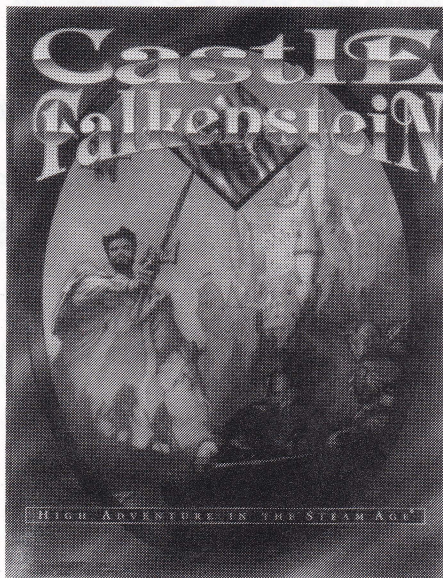
Reviews

CASTLE FALKENSTEIN

Role Play Game & Setting

by R. Talsorian Games

Reviewed by Lee Sheppard



Anyone who takes more than a cursory glance at this 224 page rule book cannot help but be impressed by the sumptuousness of the presentation. Every one of the dozens of illustrations scattered throughout the book is magnificent, with every second page in the first half of the book printed in glorious colour. But appearance is nothing without a solid game setting and system to back it up, criteria that **Castle Falkenstein** fortunately meet with ease.

The two halves of the **Castle Falkenstein** book serve distinct functions. The first uses the letters, sketches and paintings of the fictional character of Tom Olam (a twentieth century computer games designer, who is "kidnapped" and taken to the alternate reality of the world of **Castle Falkenstein**), to introduce the game setting, which in itself provides a wealth of gaming potential. It is the year 1870, and conventional armies share the stage with faerie hosts, steampunk dwarves, Sherlock Holmes and Captain Nemo.

The second half of the book introduces the game mechanics, with sections on developing character backgrounds, combat, duels, sorcery, lorebooks, gadgetech (hidden spy-type gadgets), engine magick (steam-powered airships etc.) and hints for "Hosts" (the *Falkenstein* name for GMs). The rules have been designed to ensure that *role-playing*, not *roll-playing* is the order of the

day. Perhaps the biggest shock for role-players is the news that **Castle Falkenstein** uses *playing cards* rather than dice to resolve situations (I can hear the jaws dropping already), a feature that works exceptionally well on.

Unfortunately, in trying to make the game as free-flowing as possible, a few minor problems have cropped up when you look at the game mechanics in detail. In two sections in particular - resolving actions and casting spells - I had great difficulty in understanding how to apply the rules. Each of these problems can easily be solved by setting some house rules before beginning play, and in no way detract from what is a very novel and playable system.

In the final analysis, if you are a player who can't operate without sets of tables to dictate every move your character makes, then you probably won't like this game. If you *have* advanced to the next stage of role-playing however, or are looking for something new to re-energise your interest in role-playing, then rush out and buy this game immediately - you won't be disappointed. On a purely personal level, this is the most inspiring and exciting role-playing release I've seen in many a year.

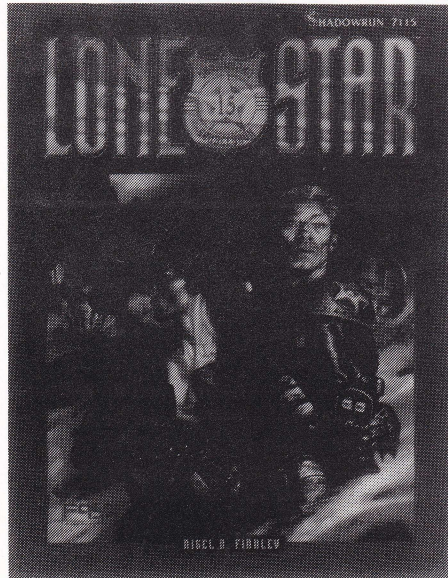
I may not want to role-play anything other than **Castle Falkenstein** for a long time to come.

LONE STAR

Shadowrun Sourcebook

by FASA Corporation

Reviewed by Malcolm Adler



So finally, after years of waiting FASA has provided a sourcebook for the most common bane of Shadowrunners; the Lone Star Securities Corp. I'm sure that in many campaigns, especially those played by combat oriented 'Runners, Lone Star is one of the main adversaries. If that is so in your gamre, then this 136 page sourcebook details everything you ever needed to know about the security corporation, from its humble beginnings to its present day grip on the law enforcement industry in 2054.

The book is well presented with eight pages of colour artwork and the usual copious amounts of black & white illustrations, all of a good standard. This works well with the traditional but not yet tired format of Shadowrun sourcebooks, which of course comes complete with glorious amounts of the much-renowned, and entertaining, Shadowtalk.

The Lone Star sourcebook covers a series of topics from the organisation's corporate structure to looking at its many specialised divisions such as; Tactical, Patrol, Investigation, Paranormal, Matrix Security, Drugs, Penology and Research & Development. In all, no less than twelve divisions and twenty three departments.

It also covers relations between Lone Star and the local police, internal corruption, correct operational procedures and more. With sections detailing new pieces of equipment, matrix ware and

weaponry there is something here for everyone.

>>>>>[But as mentioned above the book shines in its shadow talk where it truly gives the hooks and ammunition a referee needs to use such a product.

Here the book gives the true vibe on what other runners have been up against or been able to get away with. Such topics as how to bribe a Lone Star officer, how their internal investigations are conducted or how to get hold of their latest high tech gear can be invaluable.]<<<<<

-Tree Napper (14:03:07/09-AUG-94)

With such a wealth of information presented within this book, the question of whether it is of use to you and your game depends solely on the type of game you play. If you are playing in a serious campaign, or perhaps just a short scenario that is going to involve the Star, you should seriously consider the purchase.

For a good game that can only be improved with the depth that this and other books like it give it, this is worth at least a very serious look. But if your adventures regularly take you to the streets of Seattle (or as Mr Taber tells me, the Australian city-state of the Sydney Orbital) this is a worthwhile purchase.

One that will come in very handy for referees and runners alike.

THE RUINS OF MYTH DRANNOR

FR Campaign Boxed Set - TSR, Inc
Reviewed by Adam Whitt

This boxed set represents quite good value for Forgotten Realms devotees - a 128 page campaign guide, 32 page of adventure book, 8 adventure hook cards, 8 Monstrous Compendium pages and four enormous colour maps of the city ruins. But after seeing what TSR are capable of with Planescape it really pales in comparison. Here the presentation is a bit dry, the artwork lacking inspiration, and the standard AD&D high-fantasy feel sometimes grates; take, for example, the ever-so-nice Temple to Lathander providing a convenient refuge for player characters within the otherwise hellish ruins.

Written by Ed Greenwood, and filled with novel and interesting ideas, this boxed set would take quite a long time, and some good fun sessions to run through. It needs a fair amount of referee input before play can commence, but that usually does come with the territory, and with the number of 'doors' leading out of Myth Drannor it would make an excellent launch pad for a Planescape campaign. If you want to hang around and become the most powerful dudes in Faerun, that is OK, too. Reasonable value.

SPRAWL MAPS

Shadowrun Accessory
by FASA Corporation
Reviewed by Adam Whitt

If you are anything like me, you're a sucker for well drawn maps. **Sprawl Maps** is a neat accessory to Shadowrun that harks back to that golden era when every game publisher was bringing out colour floor plans printed on semi-sturdy cardboard. And good on them, I say, a referee can never get his or her hands on enough of these colourful play aids.

There are seven maps presented in this set depicting a series of typical near future suburban settings; a nightclub, apartments, park, subway/monorail station, subway/monorail cars, and two storeys of a warehouse. All maps fold-out to A3 size (the night club consists of two cards with a slight overlapped join) and are full-colour top-down views of the locales, imprinted with an unobtrusive grid of asterisks 1 inch apart to denote ground scale ideal for 25mm figures. I can see plenty of uses for all of the locales, although three monorail carriages is too many, perhaps the engine car could have been included.

Useful for all modern and near future games for when you want to show the players where they are getting 'fragged'.

RAVENLOFT

2nd Ed AD&D Campaign Setting
by TSR
Reviewed by Malcolm Adler

Everyone knows of Ravenloft, gothic horror, the supernatural and AD&D's first successful attempt to generate a game atmosphere. Since the original module the product has become its own boxed campaign setting, with recently a second edition being released. Is the latest edition good? Was a second edition necessary? And what's inside?

The first answer is an unfortunate negative. By the standards of other AD&D products perhaps it is good, but compare it to what the rest of the gaming industry can now offer and you'll see that TSR has just used an opportunity to resell a product to its customers.

This brings me to the second question. TSR has come up with a pathetic and unoriginal reason (something that reminds me of a storyline from the old D&D cartoon show) for the demi-plane to be reshaped. Such an event, the Conjunction apparently justifies us spending our money.

What's inside, very little that you didn't get the first time. Don't waste your time with this, go for Dark Sun or Planescape.

Returning to Australia by public demand

Continental Rails II and Feudal Lords II

These updated Play By Mail games are now run in Australia by Dynamic Games

Continental Rails is your chance to become a great Railroad Baron. Diplomacy essential.

Feudal Lords II allows you to kill all the other players in the game who would deny your rightful claim to the throne.



Unfortunately, there is not enough space to tell you more about these games. Contact Peter at Dynamic Games for more information.

I have a special offer associated with these games so give me a call.

SHADOWRUN AUSTRALIA

PART IV - AN UPDATE ON THE UPCOMING SOURCEBOOK

By the time you read this I will be finalising the last section of the manuscript that FASA Corporation's Tom Dowd will develop into **Shadowrun's** Australian Sourcebook.

While the final product won't be available for some time yet the project has been on the boil now for quite literally years. The process has been a long one that I hope in the end will please all concerned. We at Realms plan on keeping you up to date with news upon the sourcebook and related products as their release date nears. We will also keep you supplied with overviews and expansions upon what is covered within the final book. Add to all this a handful of scenarios in the same popular style as issue 15's *Stranglehold* and you will agree this is the venue for Shadowrun with a unique, different and Australian flavour.



SO, WHAT'S COVERED?

The Australian sourcebook spans a wide group of topics and territory. It of course covers Australia, but in 2055 one person's definition of what that is can differ a great deal to the next. The final manuscript details in all six nations, from the Antarctic Free Corporate State (AFCS), to the Australian Republic (the City-States), Tir Miallae, Singapore (the Fortress-State), New Zealand and Te Ika a Maui. But, whether all of these will be included in the final product is up to FASA and will be dependent on space considerations and the like. The manuscript also deals extensively with the Exclusion Zone (EZ), the Dreamtime dominated interior of Australia.

The major sections of the work will be similar to that of the other national sourcebooks such as Germany, London (UK), Tir nan nOg and Tir Tairngire. Space will be given to the matters of government, society, the economy, crime, the Dreamtime, history and extensive detail will be given to many of the Australian city-states, such as the Brisbane Plex, the Adelaide twin cities, the Perth Sprawl and the heart of Australia; the Axis cities of the Sydney Orbital, Canberra and Greater Melbourne.

WHAT WILL REALMS PRINT FOR IT?

Australian Realms will continue to support this setting as it has ever since its birth in the magazine in '92 (issue 6-9, 11 & 15) starting next issue with *official* material. From issue 20 a series of short articles dealing with each of the five major city-states will see print. Some of these profiles will also be published with scenarios, by the time this series has run its course the sourcebook may very well be available...

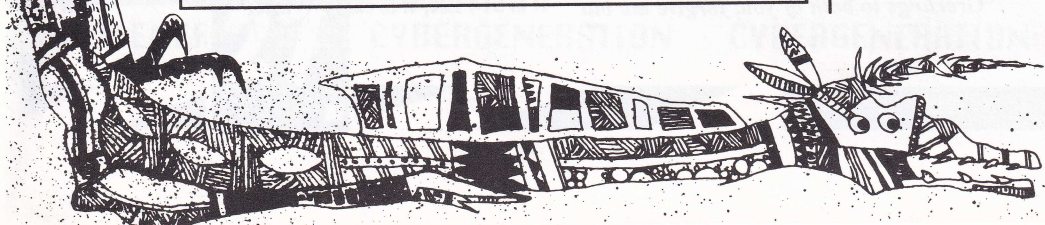
WHEN WILL IT BE HERE?

When we have a fixed release date from FASA, Realms will be the first to advise you, until then look for tasters here.

If, of course, you don't want to wait you can grab the back issues with the original source articles in, otherwise you'll just have to sit tight.

COMING NEXT ISSUE...

In 2055 the dominant power in the Australian Republic is the *Axis*; the city-states of the Sydney Orbital, Canberra and Greater Melbourne. While they are the heart of the republic, Adelaide's MFP is the brains, and that city-state will be the first in our new series.



NEWS

Cards: The Moneymaking

Richard Garfield and The Wizards of the Coast appear to have invented a new gaming form and product which many other game companies are now emulating in a rush to take advantage of the incredible heat in the market. Australia's largest mail order service, Military Simulations devoted a full page to trading card games in their Winter catalogue: WOTC are expanding their Deckmaster line with *Jyhad*, based on White Wolf's *Vampire: The Masquerade* rpg; TSR have released *Spellfire*; then there's *Star Trek The Next Generation* from Decipher Inc, the same people who do the How To Host A Murder games; *Super Deck* is a super-hero trading card game by Card Sharps Inc; and coming in December will be *Illuminati New World Order* from Steve Jackson Games - said to be "the collector's card game with attitude". And that's just the tip of the iceberg. When you think of the cost of development, art and production (TSR has printed over 50 million *Spellfire* cards) I wonder if some of these companies might not be riding the Titanic.

NB: For a Head To Head review of *Magic: The Gathering* versus *Spellfire* see page 36.

Cease & Desist

This issue's Editorial alluded to a recent and important incident in Australian Realms' history. After approaching TSR for their policy on our publishing articles devoted to their games, we were politely told to "...cease and desist publishing material that uses TSR copyrights and trademarks." What that means is TSR, Inc no longer want us to publish articles that use AD&D game statistics and other materials specific to TSR products. We acknowledge TSR's right to make this demand - I even understand it, they want to keep a tight control over how their products are represented to the public - but we think its a darned shame that they take this line, especially since Australian Realms outsells Dragon magazine over here and over 75% of our readers play the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* game. Of course, we will continue to provide excellent generic fantasy material that all roleplayers can use - including AD&D fans like me.

Talking About...Unae

Talking about excellent generic fantasy material, the *Unae* schedule for the next twelve months has been set out. In two issues time we'll see action from the *Ogre Clans* as they make their move to re-assert themselves. The Heletian Spine mountain range is about to spew forth great armies of ogres bent on wiping humanity off the map!

Something Exciting This Way Comes

We can't release details right now, but negotiations are going on in the back rooms of power and Australian Realms expects to be able to make a very exciting announcement over the few next issues. Watch this space for more news as details are finalised in our biggest project yet.

Whatever else does come to pass it will be well worth your while checking in with issue 20 because that is when we'll be relaunching the magazine with a change of format. These are changes we have been planning for some time taking what you've been telling us you want, plus some refinements that we've worked on ourselves. Those of you who have been with us for a while will notice some of the presentation changes have already made an appearance this issue - well it gets better!

With Australian Realms you are not just buying a magazine - you are getting a gaming supplement of high quality that you can use every time you roleplay!

Grand Openings, Clubs & Conventions

If you'd like to meet some of the fun people from Games Workshop (Tim is a veritable Peter Manning-Clark of Games Workshop history!), have a chat, and pick up a sackful of bargain priced GW products, then get along to one of two Grand Opening Days that are organised for over the next few months. *Mind Games, Melbourne* will host Games Workshop over the weekend of 24th/25th September, and it will be the Newcastle shop's turn in October. For all the Discount Coupons see White Dwarf 177.

Games Workshop, Australia are also looking to get involved with the convention scene in Australia. If you run a club or convention that incorporates GW tabletop games (*Warhammer 40,000*, *Space Marine*, *Fantasy Battle*, *Bloodbowl*, *Talisman*) then contact Ian Crabbe c/- Games Workshop, Unit 7: 7-9 Kent Road, Mascot, NSW, 2020.

A-Team Goodies

Remember we promised the *A-Team Tavern Brawl* last issue - well it had to undergo radical changes after some last minute playtesting and has been put back for a while. You should see it next issue (but I don't make those promises any more - see my editorial!). Also, the A-Team miniatures from Inquisition are well under way and we expect to be selling them mail order soon for around \$10.95 for a blister pack of six of the wackiest fantasy figures on the planet!

New Releases

Here is a selection of all the latest and upcoming releases:

Chaosium Inc: *Nephilim* an occult roleplaying game successfully released at Gencon 94 and feature reviewed this issue); *The Bronze Grimoire* for Elric!; *London Guidebook* for Cthulhu; *Beyond The Wall* coming up in October for Pendragon.

Games Workshop: New *Space Marine* figures; *Chaos Army* list for Warhammer Fantasy Battle; and the real biggie on its way out for Christmas is the relaunch of *Space Marine*, *Titan Legions* - according to Tim it looks "damned excellent".

Palladium Books Inc: *Rifts: Mindwerks* is out now; *Rifts World Book VII: South America* due in September; and *Rifts World Book VIII: Undersea* is due in October. Interestingly, this book will be written by Jolly Blackburn and John Zinser of *Shardis* magazine, I wonder if there will be more hook-ups between these two very creative teams? Also coming soon is *Aliens Unlimited* an expansion for *Heroes Unlimited*; and for Palladium Fantasy look out for *Yin-Soth Jungles* and *Old Kingdom Mountains*.

FASA Corporation: to celebrate Battletech's tenth anniversary comes the *Battletech Compendium* hardback; *Royalty and Rogues* is a Mechwarrior adventure; the great yearling *Earthdawn* rpg is being released in softcover format; *Parlainth the Forgotten City* should be out now for *Earthdawn*; *Harlequin's Back* (adventure), *Prime Runners* (NPC accessory) and *Burning Bright* (novel) are a trio of Shadowrun releases due in September.

R.Talsorian Games: *Castle Falkenstein* is out NOW! For a feature review of this gorgeously graphic rpg see page 4 of this issue; the *Pacific Rim* sourcebook for Cyberpunk is on its way; *Chromebook III* will appear in October as will *Mediafront* for Cybergeneration; the *Mekton Mecha Manual Vol 1* is now on the shelves.

Steve Jackson Games: their Gencon 94 release is *In Nominee*, a translation of an award-winning French rpg; this will be followed up immediately by the *In Nomine GM Pack*. *GURPS Mage* has been delayed due to some mysterious contretemps between SJG and White Wolf, in its stead is a reprint of the popular *GURPS Grimoire* and the all new *GURPS Creatures of the Night*. The *Yamara* comic strip from Dragon magazine has been collected into a 64 page book and will be available as you read this.

TSR Inc: *Tower of Doom* Ravenloft novel and two audio CD *Endless Quest* releases are *Track of the Werewolf* and *Track of the Vampire*; look out for the *Druid's Handbook*.

White Wolf: *Rage Across Australia* - yippee! *Wraith* rpg; *LA By Night* for Vampire; & *Who's Who Among Werewolves*.

...see you round like a d100!