

ISSUE
28

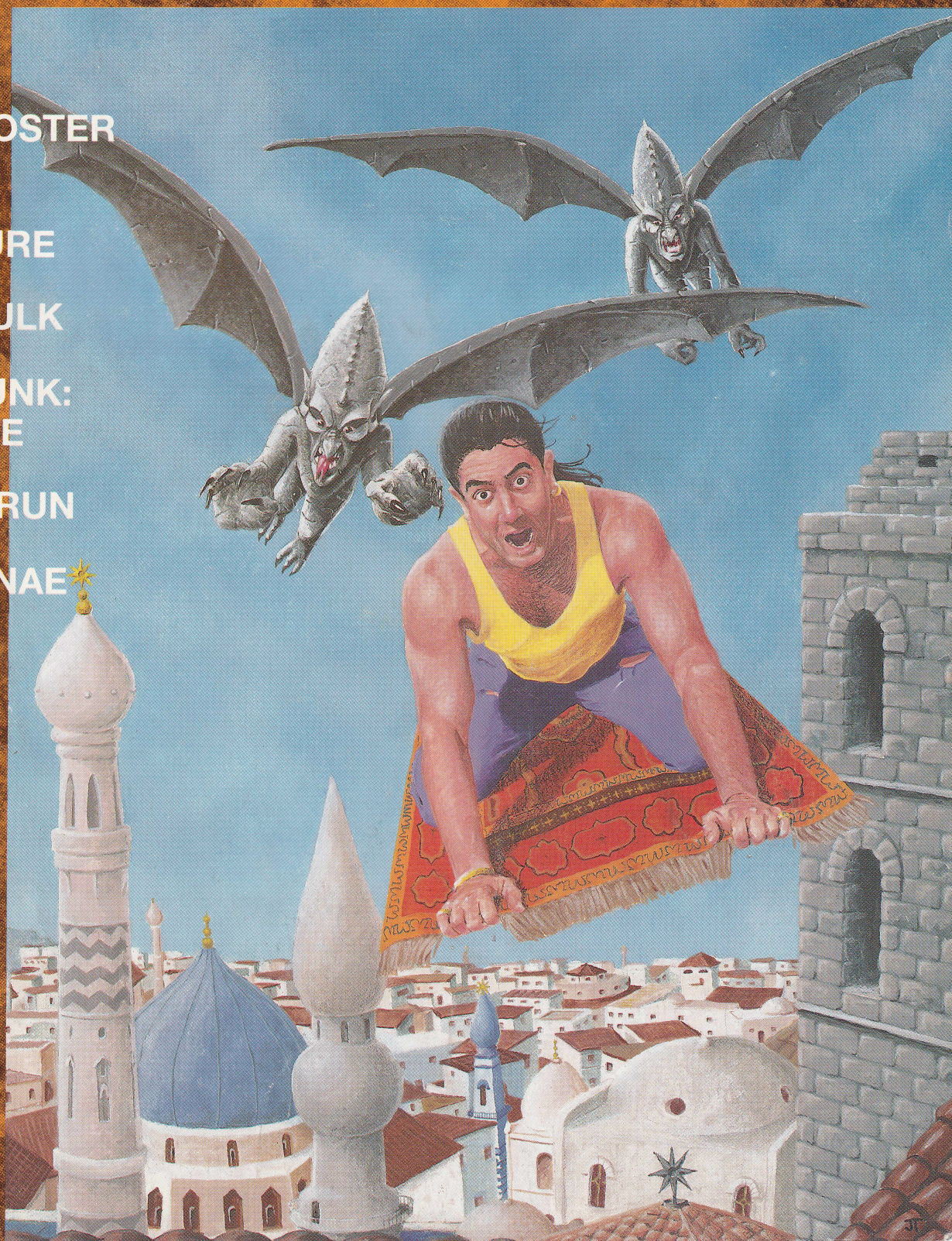
A·U·S·T·R·A·L·I·A·N

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\$4.95

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REALMS

- "KULT" POSTER
- CELTIC ADVENTURE
- SPACE HULK
- CYBERPUNK: SOLSPACE
- SHADOWRUN
- LIFE IN UNAE



POCKET REVIEWS

With so many good releases coming to our attention we thought we'd give you some pocket reviews to catch up with the inevitable backlog.

Allied General and Fantasy General (SSI) are a pair of computer wargames that share a simple game interface and enormous addictive appeal. Allied General enables you to refight three major campaigns of World War Two as either an American, British or Soviet general against a tough German adversary whilst Fantasy General has you recruiting armies of unicorns, sorcerors, elven archers etc. in a righteous campaign to overthrow the evil Shadowlord. Both games have been competing for the editor's attention recently and both are highly recommended.

Battletech Record Sheets: 3025 & 3026, 3050 and 3055 & 3058 (FASA Corp) are three pre-punched books of filled-out record sheets for all the battlemechs, tanks, hovercraft and VTOLs described in the respective Technical Readout volumes. The books include some of the major variants and feature game information for weapons and equipment on each sheet. Very useful for Battletech commanders everywhere.

Magic: A Manual of Mystic Secrets (FASA Corp) is a 144pp sourcebook for Earthdawn. This game continues to supply one of the most convincing and adventure rich magic systems of any fantasy RPG currently in print. This adjunct expands on the magic section in the core rulebook offering a spell design system, new uses for thread magic and blood magic, rules for enchanting and creating magic items plus a new magician discipline, the shaman.

Super Tuesday (FASA Corp) is a set of five adventures for Shadowrun where we see fiction echoing reality as the folk at FASA gear up for the election of a new UCAS president. This book introduces the main candidates and even supplies an Absentee Voting slip so that fans can exercise their right to vote. The adventures look interesting and there will be plenty of support material in the form of novels and sourcebooks to make this election one of the biggest events in gaming in 1996. Shame we can't make it to Gencon for the inauguration ceremony!

GURPS Blood Types (Steve Jackson Games) is a vampiric bestiary that draws on the many vampire myths from around the world. In true GURPS fashion this treatment is one of the better looks at these dreaded bloodsuckers and

makes an excellent sourcebook for just about any game featuring vampires be it horror, fantasy, or gothic punk. There's even a generous helping of humour; Varney the Vampire, indeed!

Speaking of humour, **GURPS IOU** (Steve Jackson Games) details Illuminati University and takes a lot of really funny snipes at the Ivy League and other sacred cows. And if you are wondering how to fit this weird and wacky institution into your campaign, don't worry, the IOU is EVERYWHERE! (It's all part of the conspiracy, don't you know). Illustrated by Phil and Kaja Foglio, the art in this book is a treat.

We didn't get this book sent for review, but Adam insisted we mention it anyway. **Uncaged: Faces of Sigil** (TSR, Inc) is a book of adventure hooks and plotlines for the Planescape setting disguised as a roll call of non-player characters. But don't worry - the boring AD&D™ stats occupy small side bars, the majority of this 128 book is made up of superb art, brilliant text and some wonderfully quirky personalities and stories that will adorn any fantasy campaign. Now that's a sourcebook - no more of the Complete PC Kits of the Upper Zambezi books please! ■

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"Have YOU subscribed?"

KNIGHTS OF THE CHURCH: THE THE TEMPLARS

UNOFFICIAL SOURCE MATERIAL FOR  SHADOWRUN®

By John Pope

"The time for killing and the time for healing."

-Ecclesiastes 3.3

>>>>>(Ever since the Crusades there have been conflicting tales of the Knightly Orders of the Church. I have dug up what dirt I could on them with the help of a few others. And I have posted here what dirt that I could find. Much of what I put up has been deleted by someone else. Comment freely, though. That way some of my research may make it back in.)<<<<<

- Judge Theo (16:54:12/10-Mar-55)

THE TEMPLARS

>>>>>(These were the first of the Orders reformed by His Holiness. At the time they were ostensibly reformed to protect the Church's interests during the Euro-Wars; all of those holy sites that are dotted throughout the Balkans.)<<<<<

- Judge Theo (16:55:50/10-Mar-55)

The Order of the Temple was first founded way back in 1187 by a small handful of people to provide protection for pilgrims on the road from Jerusalem to the sea at Jaffa.

>>>>>(Hey, Judge, what is this drek?)<<<<<

- Impatient (09:16:49/01-Jun-55)

>>>>>(This is that precious background research you runner slots should be doing for yourselves.)<<<<<

- Rook (03:34:32/02-Jun-55)

They chose their name on the mistaken belief that the Mosque that they'd adopted as their headquarters was the biblical Temple of Solomon; hence they became the Knights of the Temple, colloquially, Templars. In time their success in protecting pilgrims and their fanaticism to their cause would result in them becoming popular among the Christians and hated passionately by the Muslims. As the Templars success continued they grew in wealth and power, eventually becoming a powerful merchant banking organisation.

>>>>>(Gold Temple?)<<<<<

- Iamexed (00:13:50/11-Mar-55)

In fact they became such a powerful organisation that in later Crusades, nobles and even Kings would borrow from them to finance their armies. This also led to the ultimate downfall of the Templars. Fearing their growing power, and lacking any authority over them, Philip the Fair, King of France,

>>>>>(To the victor the spoils, including your opportunity to write the history books.)<<<<<

- HistoryBuff (02:37:52/15-Mar-55)

would move to seize the wealth of the Templars. He accused the Order of many crimes against the Church including heresy, black magic, and other perversions. Under torture the chief officers of the Order were forced to give signed confessions.

>>>>>(Philip also bought several Cardinals and had a French Pope installed after assassinating the previous Pope who would not aid him because he saw the King was trying to relieve his debts to the Templars and increase his own power.)<<<<<

- Malachy (01:28:17/16-May-55)

>>>>>(Who says crime doesn't pay?)<<<<<

- MadVlad (01:32:45/02-Arp-55)

After being released from torture the Templar chief officers retracted their confessions but to no avail. The Order of the Temple was extinguished after 200 years of service.

>>>>>(Not quite. The Order was extinguished in most of Europe, but no one got around to it in England or Scotland. And in Germany the Grand Master saved the Order there by challenging the various Clergy at his trial to Trial by Combat as was his right. Declining this challenge they pronounced him innocent. Being of high rank in the Church he then took his seat at the table in full battle-gear and went on to have the charges dropped against his brethren. These men became known as the Knights of Johann from that time onward.)<<<<<

- Raphael (01:01:01/01-Apr-55)

>>>>>(What about the Masons?)<<<<<

- Curious (09:25:30/01-Jun-55)

>>>>>(The Masons did adopt and use a lot of the Templar traditions but they are not actually Templars.)<<<<<

- Rook (04:01:54/02-Jun-55)

NEW ORDER OF THE TEMPLE

On November 3rd, 2032, His Holiness Pope Peter II decreed the foundation of the New Order of the Temple, or the Neo-Templars as they are more commonly known. The Order was founded to provide protection for the interests of the Church in areas of conflict, whether this be the protection of the Faithful or the protection of Places of Faith. The Neo-Templars were soon put into action in the Balkans as the second stage of the Euro-Wars got under way. Here they swiftly developed a reputation as superior warriors.

>>>>>(Not just superior, they were fanatical loonies.)<<<<<
- Scorpion (04:50:10/02-Jun-55)

>>>>>(Be careful whom you describe as a fanatical loony. Or someone might just demo how small a bug you are.)<<<<<
- Hermes (15:01:53/02-Jun-55)

>>>>>(Now, now, people let's keep the threats and hostility out of here shall we. Jesus died for us all, remember.)<<<<<
- Judge Theo (23:06:37/02-Jun-55)

Very few sites were damaged, and even less were lost during the entire conflict. Following their successes in the Balkans the Neo-Templars expanded and began protecting churches and holy sites all around the world. They have been involved in several incidents since then most notably in Aztlan, when the Aztlan government tried to evict the Church from Guadalupe. Here the Templars were able to hold off a massive assault and keep safe the Holy Site.

>>>>>(If this is the case why is it that the Church doesn't control this holy site any more?)<<<<<
- Monami (21:23:56/01-Apr-55)

>>>>>(Just because the Azzies have a great stinkin' wall around it and a small army with way too many magicians in it outside the wall doesn't mean they control the site.)<<<<<
- Raphael (01:01:01/01-Apr-55)

>>>>>(Indeed, Raphael, but the Church doesn't have what you would call free access to it, do they?)<<<<<
- Damien (00:13:32/02-??-??)

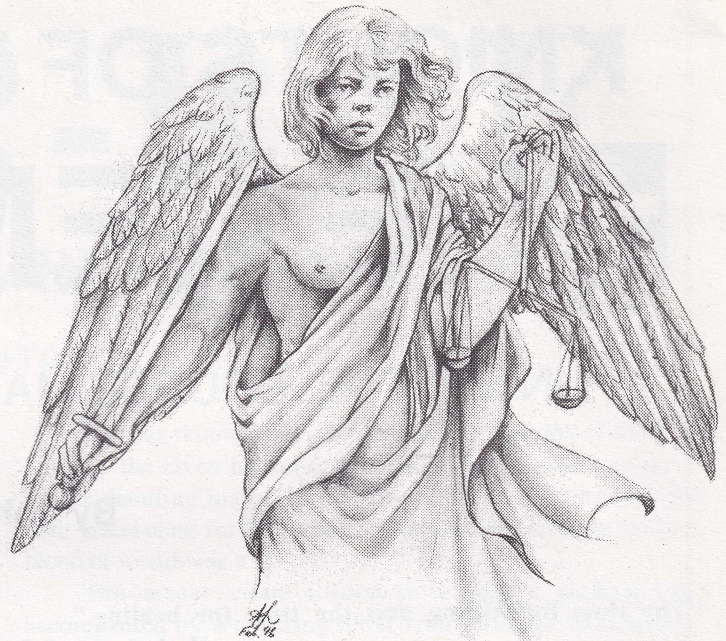
THE NEO-KNIGHT

The Order of the Neo-Templars is divided similarly to the structure of their historical counterparts. The commanders are all commissioned officers and are referred to collectively as Knights, and the noncoms are all called Sergeants, as they were during the Crusades. And, as in the historic order, there are the clergy, priests who provide spiritual guidance to the soldiers.

The commissioned officers are all experienced veterans who were asked to join the Order at its refounding. Becoming a Knight is exclusively by invitation only. This invitation is only ever extended to quality, experienced soldiers.

>>>>>(So who are the people at the top?)<<<<<
- Still Curious (0/10:02:56/01-Jun-55)

>>>>>(My take on the picture is the absolute head honcho (other than God) is His Holiness Peter II. Below him is the Supreme Grand Master, and serving him there are several other Grand Masters, effectively one for each country the Church operates in. The Supreme Grand Master is, as far as I can



prove, a female Elf who left Ireland late in 2031. Her name is Elise O'Toole, and she is one seriously nasty lady.)<<<<<
- Wombat (01-04:34/23-Jun-55)

>>>>>(What's with all this use of the funny titles?)<<<<<
- Monolith (03:44:32/23-Jun-55)

>>>>>(Traditional titles of monastic knighthoods.)<<<<<
- HistoryBuff (21:21:35/23-Jun-55)

>>>>>(Can you not see a Pattern? Haha.)<<<<<
- H (01:37:44/26-Jun-55)

>>>>>(I wouldn't describe Elise as seriously nasty. She is very competent, and a particularly good field commander. She has apparently spent time in Tir Tairngire as well.)<<<<<
- Kaed (02:22:41/26-Jun-55)

>>>>>(Her time was spent on Royal Hill, and on the Cal Free border. She's also a diplomat, and fair to look upon.)<<<<<
- Aegis (04:33:45/15-Jul-55)

>>>>>(Can we get on with this and leave the Elise O'Toole admiration society alone?)<<<<<
- Spike (11:20:34/17-Jul-55)

Traditionally the Templar Sergeants were also experienced soldiers. Nowadays, however, anyone can apply to become a Sergeant. And of course we all now how you become a priest.

The Neo-Knight is generally skilled in most forms of modern combat, and receives training equivalent to that of special forces units. They are always equipped with the best gear and the majority of their weapons have IBS System (see *Corporate Security*) protection. While the average warrior tends to be well trained, they lack any further enhancements, at least for the first year or so, unless magically active. Once the Church has decided to bankroll the upgrades for Johnny Knight, they tend to provide alpha grade cyberware and certain types of bioware, all of which is inobtrusive and not directly offensive.

>>>>>(Yeah, this means that these guys are running around with Ortho-skin, Wired Reflexes, Enhanced Articulation, Cerebral Boosts, Encephalons, Synaptic Accelerators, Smartlink II's and other nifty gear. Great. No problems.)<<<<<
- Scorpion (05:50:45/02-Jun-55)

The Neo-Templars also harbour a great many adepts. These are mainly physical adepts but they are also augmented by a good number of sorcerous adepts, as well as a few full magicians (of both traditions).

>>>>>(Right, and those physads just love all those nifty little powers like; Improved Ability Stealth, Traceless Walk, Missile Mastery, Improved Ability-anything-combat-related, Killing Hands, Delay Damage, Freefall, Iron Will, Magic Resistance, Spell Shroud, Counterstrike, Blind Fighting, and Nerve Strike. All of which goes to make them particularly hard to spot and really good at acing the opposition.)<<<<<

- Adept Annie (13:24:55/20-Mar-55)

And this is where the Knighthood starts getting all mystical. Joining the Order is the same as joining a magical group regardless of whether you are a mundane or magically active. If you are magically active you have to join a further initiatory order as well. The conditions of joining are swearing an oath and the provision of a tissue sample.

>>>>>(I know you're all thinking ritual magic here and you're absolutely right. But some very interesting things have been done using this, including setting up a ritual team for each

member of a strike force and preparing a heal spell. So that when the guy at the other end gets toasted the mages zap him with the heal spell and he springs back into action none the worse. Does wonders for the morale of their enemies.)<<<<<

- Hermes (17:01:58/02-Jun-55)

The shamanic adepts of the order generally follow the Archangel Michael or Saint George as their totems, though some follow other warrior-like totems. In terms of spells, surprisingly the Templars mainly opt for illusion spells against their enemies, particularly Chaos, and Chaotic World. Though manipulation spells like Mob Mind followed up with spells like Influence are also much in evidence. All preferred spell types either remove the enemy from the battle or inhibit his/her performance in the battle and are non-lethal options. Not that you shouldn't expect the Neo-Knights to throw combat spells around, they just prefer non-lethal solutions.

>>>>>(Well that preference comes unstuck in a big way when faced with Insect Spirits or those Wraith things, plus Ghouls and other similar critters. Though the Church does not seem to be fanatically pursuing HMMHV cases.)<<<<<

- Hern (23:34:32/29-Mar-55).

THE NEO-TEMPLARS & ORDER OF SAINT MICHAEL

The Neo-Templars are an organisation formed and controlled by the Church for the purpose of protecting the Churches interests. They are also used to investigate or recover information on subjects of interest to the Church.

NAME: Order of the Temple.

MEMBERS: Aprox 10,000 world wide. Includes all members.

TYPE: Dedicated (Religion: Christian)

PATRON: United Catholic Church.

LIMITATIONS: Members must first be a Confirmed (in the religious sense) member of the Church.

STRICTURES: Attendance (mass once/week min), Fraternity, Obedience, Belief (Christian), Oath, Material Link (cell sample)

RESOURCES/DUES:: Luxury Resources. Members pay no dues as the Church provides for them. (See below).

CUSTOMS: The Order promotes Christian beliefs and ideals in addition to providing practical (military) protection of the Church's interests. They practice various Christian traditions, particularly in regards the celebration of religious events. Also, as in the past, the Templar's oath includes a vow of poverty, hence any earnings that a Templar may make outside his duties as a Templar become the property of the Church. However the Church provides Middle life style for all members and their family.

NAME: Brotherhood of Saint Michael.

MEMBERS: 1000 (Includes adepts and magicians).

TYPE: Initiatory.

PATRON: Archangel Michael.

LIMITATIONS: Belief (Christian), Magically active.

STRICTURES: As per the Order of the Temple plus Secrecy (about the Magical practices) and they swear an additional Oath.

NOTES: Resources/Dues and Customs are the same as the Order. The Brotherhood prefers Ordeals and Astral Quests for Initiation. Physical adepts are encouraged to learn Astral Perception to allow them to combat Astral enemies. Among the Brotherhood of Saint Michael (or the Archangel Michael) there is a roughly equal division of Shamanic and Hermetic magicians, with a few Religious magicians (See *Awakenings*). Due to the number of Physical adepts there is perhaps a slight lean towards Hermetic practices though about a third of the Physical Adepts are Shamanic in nature.

TOTEMS: Their Totems are Saint Michael (most common), the German idols Dragonslayer (followed as Saint George), and Horned God (the next most common), Wolf, Bear, Firebringer, and other aggressive totems that defend man.

ARCHANGEL MICHAEL: Is the angel of repentance, righteousness, mercy, sanctification, of final reckoning and the weigher of souls. He's the warrior of God and slayer of the Beast. Saint Michael is a serious, judgmental guardian of the Faithful. When not in Heaven weighing the souls of the departed he is on Earth fighting the enemies of the Lord. As a Totem Saint Michael is the Stern Warrior. Bound by his duties to protect and aid those in need, Michael has little time for those he judges unworthy, or for frivolities. He is a serious and forthright Totem, honorable and honest as deception is a tool of his enemies.

FAVOURED ENVIRONMENT: Everywhere.

ADVANTAGES: +2 dice for combat spells, +1 dice for banishing, +2 dice for combat pool when fighting insect spirits and The Enemy (see *Harlequin's Back*).

DISADVANTAGES: -2 dice for resisting illusion spells, - 1 dice for conjuring spirits. If a follower of Michael gives his word he will keep it (Willpower(4) needs three success to break his word).

New Releases

"The time has come" the walrus said
"to talk of many things."

"Well, bugger that" the Editor said
"tell our readers about the new releases
first instead for a change."

TSR Inc: *Bleak House*, the *Ravenloft* boxed set should be in stores now, as is the *Faces of Sigil*, a *Planescape* accessory. Explore the organisations of thieves guilds in the *Den of Thieves* and hand over your hard earned cash for the *Players Option: Spells & Magic* handbook.

Wizards of the Coast: We can hear the piggy banks shattering already. The month of May sees the release of the next M:TG expansion set - *Alliances*. This supplement is both an expansion for the stand-alone *Ice Age* setting, as well as an expansion for the regular M:TG setting. Just try not to drool so much on the page please.

FASA Corp: *ShadowRun* begins its major new storyline - the Election of 2057 - with the release of *Super Tuesday*, an adventure pack containing five related adventures dealing with the candidates for the Presidency. Also for *ShadowRun* is the *Threats* sourcebook - said to be a view of the big picture - for those who can handle it. *Earthdawn* has *Magic: A Manual of Mystic Secrets*, and the *Serpent River* sourcebook.

Palladium Books Inc: The re-release of the *Palladium Fantasy RPG* is confirmed for the end of March. *Rifts* fans will be satisfied with the imminent release of *World Book 10: The Juicer Uprisings* (and not an orange in sight!) and *World Book 11: The Coalition War Machine*. Expect enough BFGs to bring on an orgasmic frenzy.

R.Talsorian Games: The big rumour doing the rounds at the moment is that Mike Pondsmith is working on a 3rd Edition of *Cyberpunk*. We're still waiting for confirmation of that fact, but we're sure that if Mike gives it the sort of treatment that he gives to all of his work -

it'll be brilliant. In the meantime, *Cyberpunk*, *Cybergeneration*, *Mekton Z* and *Castle Falkenstein* are all well supported with a number of new releases.

Media Shifts

White Wolf have announced that the *Vampire: The Masquerade* weekly television series will kick off on US TV screens with a two-hour movie this April. Produced by Spelling Entertainment (Beverly Hills 90210, Melrose Place), *Kindred: The Embraced* focuses on the Machiavellian aspects of the vampire underworld. Vampire fans can be assured that the series will maintain the feel of the RPG - Mark Rein-Hagen, *Vampire: The Masquerade's* creator is a producer and writer for the series.

In other media-related news, **Chameleon Eclectic**, creators of the *Millenium's End* and *Psychosis* RPGs have announced plans to produce the *Babylon 5 Role-playing Game*. Given the strong following this sci-fi program has generated, and combined with a healthy proposed release schedule (4 products before the end of 1996), we think Chameleon Eclectic could be on to a winner.

ShadowRun Australia

All good things come to those who wait. Long time *Realms* readers would know that our own Assistant Editor Colin Taber was commissioned by FASA to produce the *ShadowRun Australia* sourcebook. Well it now appears that his work will finally see print. A recent message from FASA announced that they hope to release this sourcebook in the first quarter of 1997. We'll keep you posted.

A New Home

Following on from last issue's news page, **Wizards of the Coast** have announced that new homes have been found for its role-playing products *Everway* and *Ars Magica*. **Pagan Publishing**, producers of a number of licensed products for **Chaosium's** *Call of Cthulhu* RPG have picked up *Everway*

and have plans to release *Spherewalker Source Cards* quite soon. *Ars Magica* has been bought by **Atlas Games**, the company responsible for the *Over the Edge* RPG and the *On the Edge* collectible trading card game. Atlas have plans to release a fourth edition of *Ars Magica*, and a number of follow-up products.

BattleTech 4th Edition

Bigger, better and more colourful than before, *BattleTech 4th Edition* will give players a wider choice of game options while allowing FASA to keep the game at an entry-level price. The proposed set will include a full-colour rulebook, a second book containing advanced rules and scenarios, pre-generated record sheets and two new full-colour maps. In addition, FASA will be replacing the 14 plastic 'Mechs currently offered with 2 each of 24 die-cut, full-colour 'Mech counters. *BattleTech 4th Edition* will also advance the fiction of the game to the year 3049 - just before the Clan invasion of the Inner Sphere. Sounds cool, can't wait to see it.

World Wide Web

Strange as it may seem, there are some people out there who still haven't heard of *Australian Realms* (Let's admit it, some people don't even know that *Australia* exists...) and we thought, rampant techno-junkies that we are (OK, one of us once owned a Commodore 64), "let's get hooked up to the communication revolution of the '90s".

Thus we have launched the Australian *Realms* World Wide Web Page. This contains such useful and entertaining features as a back-issue index, profiles (and pictures!!) of the editorial team, information on current and upcoming issues and projects, reprints of some of the most popular articles from past issues, a forum where we can hopefully get stuck into some controversial topics and perhaps even some links to other Australian web pages of interest to all you net surfers out there. So come and take a butcher's hook:

<http://www.iinet.net.au/~expo/realms.html>

See you 'round like a D100...

THAT WAS THE NEWS