

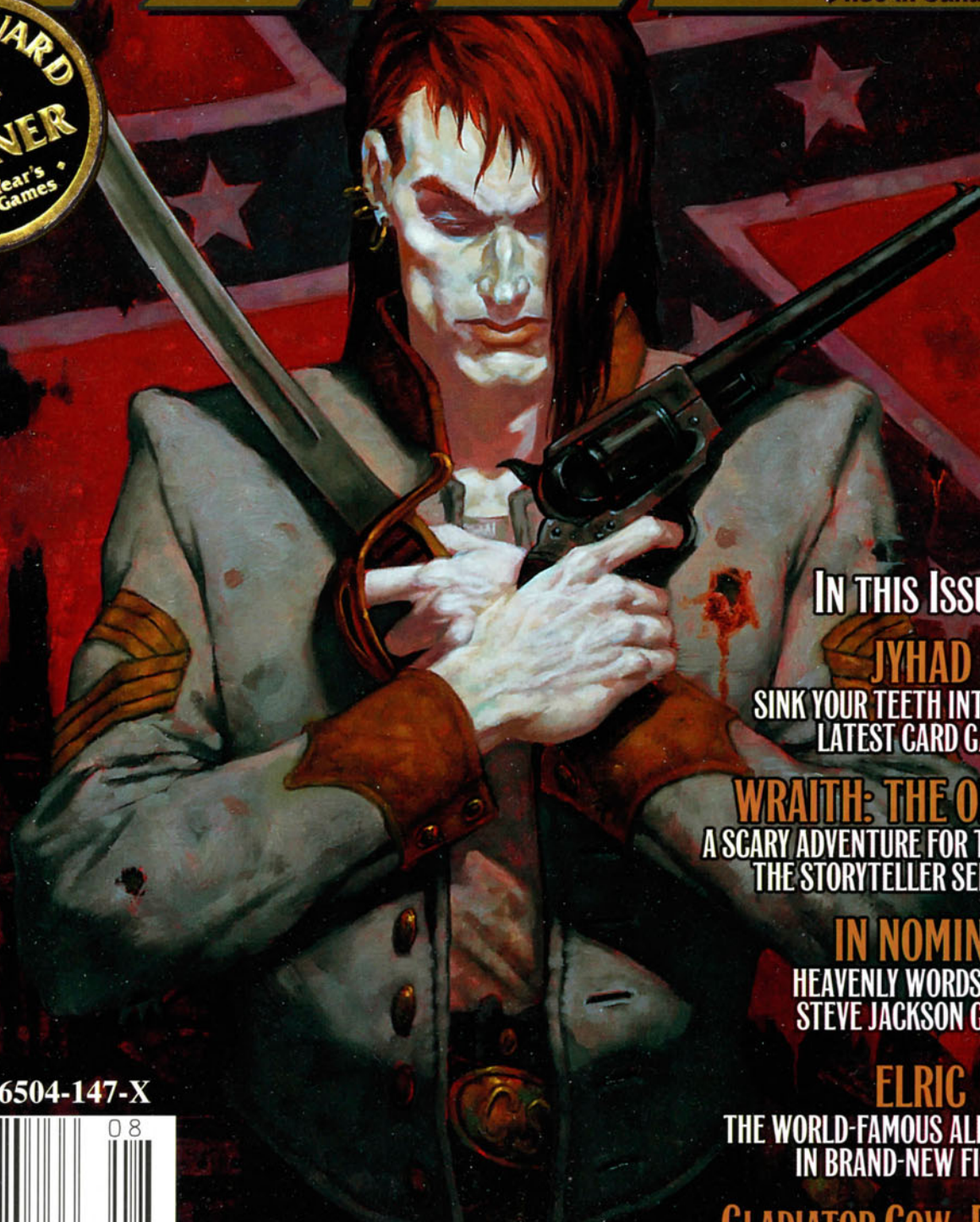
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Feature Review: Denver Boxed Set

Rating:



Publisher:
FASA Corporation, 1100
West Cermak, Suite B305
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Author:
Nigel D. Findley

Price: \$25

**Reviewed by Jeffrey W.
Cisneros**

Shadowrun is FASA's most successful roleplaying game line, so a release as large as the **Denver** boxed set is an important one. First, let me point out that I was given a prerelease copy to review. All I received was a manuscript, but with a little begging was able to snag a full-color copy of the cover art. The piece, by Dave McCoy, is beautiful. It does a good job of attracting attention without offending the eye. The skyscrapers in the background of the illustration are reminiscent of the real Denver.

When I first opened this product I anticipated excellence, considering who its author is. I'm sorry to say that I was somewhat disappointed. While this is not a bad product, it lacks the fiery inspiration of *Tir Tairngire*.

The Player Manual

The Player Manual, while offering some very useful information, causes sensory overload. It presents a great deal of side commentary from fictional "logged-on" characters. For those of you who don't read **Shadowrun** products, these inserts, through rumor, innuendo and artful lies, often contradict information provided in the main text. The intent is to offer greater insight into a subject, presenting several different perspectives on it.

This campaign supplement takes the technique to new heights, but to the product's detriment. Pages seem too "busy" and don't read very well. Nonetheless, if you have patience, **Denver** offers some very useful information.

The Player Manual is divided into six sections: local information, history, the current situation, power groups, the nexus and sector descriptions. The local information section provides meteorological details, geographical

information and directions for getting around the sectors that make up Denver or Front Range Free Zone area. The local information section is a promising start.

Disappointment sets in with the book's history section. It begins with a discussion of how Denver became the FRFZ. This is where the "online" inserts begin, and they're particularly troublesome given the subject matter. A game setting's history needs to be presented clearly so that the background of the campaign is easily understood. This is particularly true for **Shadowrun**. One of the reasons that the game is so popular is that no one knows who the enemy is or where it's coming from. That being the case, you don't want to be confused about the historical setting, too.

Fortunately, *The Player Manual* improves with the sector guide. It provides lots of useful information, offers some genuinely interesting rumors and divulges a secret or two. This section is rich with the information that players want. Information includes descriptions of sectors' interesting areas, laws, penalties for breaking those laws and sector boundaries. Here, too, computer messages are intriguing rather than intrusive. At long last, after digging through the fluff, we see just how good a campaign setting the FRFZ is.

The Gamemaster's Book

The Gamemaster's Book is tightly written, coherent and much less confusing than *The Player Manual*. This book provides a lot of extremely useful information with a minimum of inserts. It, too, is divided into sections. The introduction gives the gamemaster some choices. At major points in the campaign you're offered

three options of how to execute the plot, complete with justifications of why each occurs. This flexibility is one of **Denver's** major selling points. All too many "canned" campaigns offer a static plotline.

The next two sections detail the spirits and major NPCs of Denver. Their descriptions involve the three plot options, each of which influences how the characters behave. The next section deals with locations and places of interest. A particularly intriguing spot is Mikey's Chips 'n' Drek in the Ute Sector. This rundown store houses a rather big surprise for those who base themselves in Ute. This section also deals with organizations of interest, including a little Yakuza action for those who like a mixture of traditional and near-future themes.

Finally, you get the rules for play in the Denver campaign setting. All of the necessities are taken care of: how to get there legally and illegally, air travel options, airport security, border security and banned items. There's even advice on how to gamemaster life in Denver, with all the little quirks that make life interesting.

It's gratifying to see that the **Shadowrun** system is being supported. Let's face it: most game companies aren't megapublishers with thousands of dollars to throw around. So, rather than invest in a brand new game that would sell better, FASA is putting its money in smaller releases that support its biggest game.

Overall, I recommend this product. For all its problems it still makes a useful addition to any **Shadowrun** campaign. And, if we don't support FASA's efforts to maintain the **Shadowrun** line, the company might not support it either. 