

Fantasy Gamer

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JUNE/JULY 1984 NUMBER 6

The Giant Jumps In

Avalon Hill's
New RPGs Reviewed



Lost Inheritance

A Complete Fantasy
Roleplaying Adventure

Featured Reviews:

Bushido and Chivalry & Sorcery

Terra II PBM

And 5 Pages of Capsules



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NUMBER 6
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ADVENTURE SUPPLEMENT

Lost Inheritance * David Dunham
 Trapped in a bizarre alien realm! 10

SPECIAL SECTION

Avalon Hill Jumps In!
 The giant publishes *three* RPGs and a new magazine. *FG* looks at all of them.
Powers & Perils * Matthew J. Costello 24
RuneQuest 3 * David Dunham 26
Heroes * Scott Haring 26
Lords of Creation * Warren Spector 28

REVIEWS

Bushido/Chivalry & Sorcery * Ron Pehr
 Roleplaying in feudal France — and feudal Japan 4
 Capsule Reviews 38
 GAMES: *Middle Passage*, *Elfquest*, *Victorian Adventure*. SUPPLEMENTS: *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Monster Manual II*, *Dungeonland*, *The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror*, *Ardor*, *Encyclopedia Harnica*, *Citybook II*, *The Fungi From Yuggoth*, *Horror on the Hill*, *Maze of the Riddling Minotaur*. PLAY AIDS: 20-Sided Polyhedra Dice. COMPUTER GAMES: *Zork III*. MINIATURES: *Dragon Lords*.

KEEPING POSTED

Terra II Review * Chris Frink
 Exploration by mail 32
 PBM Update 33

FEATURES

Letters 29
Fantasy Gamer Reader Survey 30
 Blood On My Typewriter * Chris Frink
 An important announcement 35
 Village Idiot 36
 Convention Calendar 37
 Index to Advertisers 43
 Finieous Fingers * J.D. Webster 44
 Murphy's Rules * Ben Sargent 46

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Computer Games

You might be wondering why anybody would want to bother reviewing dice. On the other hand, where would we be without them? Many wargames and almost all RPGs call for those funny-shaped dice that we love to collect in their many colors and shapes. And since it is impossible to distinguish quality visually, we tend just to look for the exact color we want and ignore brand distinctions. It is worth pointing out, however, that only Gamescience of all U.S. dice manufacturers guarantees its dice to last at least two years without visible wear. Gamescience dice can be identified by the tiny "G" next to the number one on the die, if you look closely.

The most widely-played roleplaying game, *Dungeons & Dragons*, requires the use of 20-sided dice (d20) for combat and magic, so there is much demand for them. Until recently, almost all d20s were icosahedra numbered 1-0 (read as 1-10) twice. The advantage then was that you could read the same die as a d10 for damage rolls or as a d20 for combat resolution — but it required marking the die in two colors so you could positively identify which half was the low side (1-10) and which was the high (11-20). The problem with this is that there is no widely agreed-upon convention for which color is which, so there is always a potential for mistakes, or even cheating, by changing which color is "high" after rolling the die.

To meet this need, several manufacturers started selling icosahedra numbered 1-20, and issued ten-sided irregular polyhedra for use as d10s. These sell very nicely, and double the profit by forcing the gamer to buy two dice when only one is required. Gamescience decided it would offer an alternative, and in addition to its 1-20 dice is now selling icosahedra with two clearly-engraved, unmistakably different sets of 1-10. The first set is the plain 1-0, and the second set is 1-0 with a small "+" in front. This allows the user to mark the die in only one color or leave it as is, and still positively identify the high and low ranges when reading the die as a d20. Of course, when using the die as a d10, you simply ignore the plus sign.

This system is even cleverer than it seems. For those people who are disgruntled at the need to read a number with a "+" in front and mentally add ten to read in the "teens, there is a way of marking the dice so that they read directly. Simply mark only the vertical part of the "+," and you have a die that reads in the high series with a small "1" in front. Thus the numbers 11-19 can be read directly on the die (the 20 still needs to have the complete "+" marked in, but you can't have everything). And these additions are small enough so that you can still read the die as a d10 without distraction when this is what you need.

Congratulations to Lou Zocchi for solving a problem in a way that also saves the gamer money.

—John T. Sapienza, Jr.

ZORK III: THE DUNGEON MASTER (Infocom Inc.); \$39.95. Available for Atari 800 (32K), Apple II+ (48K), TRS-80, Commodore 64, and seven others. Published 1982.

ZORK III is the culmination of the all-text adventure saga which began with **ZORK I: The Underground Empire**. If you solve all of the subtle mysteries, you may end the game with all of the treasures of ZORK at your disposal. Along the way, you may see and hear the legendary Dimwit Flathead or speak with the omniscient Dungeon Master himself.

ZORK III is slightly smaller than either **ZORK I** or **II**, but is rich in subtle detail. All of the puzzles are logical, complex, and highly interactive. In terms of puzzle quality, this game is possibly the most difficult on the market today.

The implementation of this game is first-class, with an excellent save-game feature, command parser and large vocabulary. In fact, the vocabulary of this game is arguably its most outstanding feature. It is sufficiently large to keep you from becoming frustrated by a limited vocabulary while allowing you to become frustrated by the game's many puzzles.

ZORK III is possibly the ultimate in all-text adventure games. If you enjoy the intellectual stimulation of such games, **ZORK III** is highly recommended.

—Terry Quinn

Miniatures

DRAGON LORDS — Horrors of the Marsh, Orcs of the Severed Hand, Subterranean Terrors (Grenadier Models); \$7. 25mm fantasy miniatures, 10-piece boxed sets. Sculpted by John Dennett. Released 1983.

Unlike some of the other *Dragon Lords* sets, these three Grenadier releases are newly sculpted figures — not just a repackaged set. And after continued study, I still can't tell which set I like best.

"Horrors of the Marsh" gives us some standard RPG monsters (a troll, a giant rat, and a trio of "lizard" men) and some new beasts, like a Log Leech and a Vegetation Beast. The Lizard Men are lean and nasty, and the detail is excellent — from the scales on the top of the head to the mace-like tail end. I'm especially fond of the skull-adorned loincloths each one is wearing. And the Sludge Serpent is the best snake I've ever seen . . . in a marsh or on dry land.

—Scott D. Haring

Advertisers Index

<i>Adventures By Mail</i>	17	<i>Integral Games</i>	34
<i>Adventure Systems</i>	13	<i>Iron Crown Enterprises</i>	43
<i>Clemens & Associates</i>	22	<i>Merchant's Guild (Retailers)</i>	40
<i>Columbia Games Inc.</i>	2	<i>Mystic Swamp</i>	19
<i>The Companions</i>	7	<i>Nova Games</i>	9
<i>Compleat Strategist</i>	16	<i>Players' Lair</i>	33
<i>Dark Horse</i>	21	<i>RJM Enterprises</i>	37
<i>Fantasy Book</i>	47	<i>Round Table</i>	39
<i>Flying Buffalo</i>	41	<i>StaCom Simulations</i>	15
<i>Gamelords</i>	37	<i>Steve Jackson Games</i>	5, 8, 45, IBM
<i>Graaf Simulations</i>	42	<i>TriTac Inc.</i>	23
<i>Hero Games</i>	31	<i>West End Games</i>	BC

"Orcs of the Severed Hand" is a group of nine foul-looking orcs with a particularly grisly banner, which one of the figures proudly carries while sounding a battle horn. Every figure is clearly an individual, with the varying sizes, poses, and even faces you would expect if you ever really ran into this little brigade. Again, the detail is staggering, from designs carved into the orcs' helmets to the strap holding the head of one orc's war hammer to the shaft.

"Subterranean Terrors" is perhaps the weakest of the three sets, but it still has some incredible pieces. The Nightmare Worm with Larvoid Rider is one — a worm with short arms wielding a spear, intertwined with and riding a larger, fanged cousin. There are some other pieces in this set I'll just call "interesting" — they're not bad, they just didn't do anything for me.

Overall casting quality is excellent. Many of the figures were touched by a file more out of nervous habit than from any need to remove flash. The fit on detached pieces was perfect. A minimum of preparation was required before priming and painting began.

Another nice touch was the insert sheet provided in the "Horrors of the Marsh" set. Complete data is given on each playing figure in a fantasy roleplaying game. Size, hit points, experience level, defense, attacks, treasure, movement, and behavior notes for each creature are given. Most of the information is sufficiently generic to be used with any system; those stats that aren't can be easily converted. Unfortunately, such stats are not provided with the other two sets. The missing stats were the biggest disappointment I encountered.

To sum up, these are three fine figure sets — good looking, well made, and definitely worth the money.

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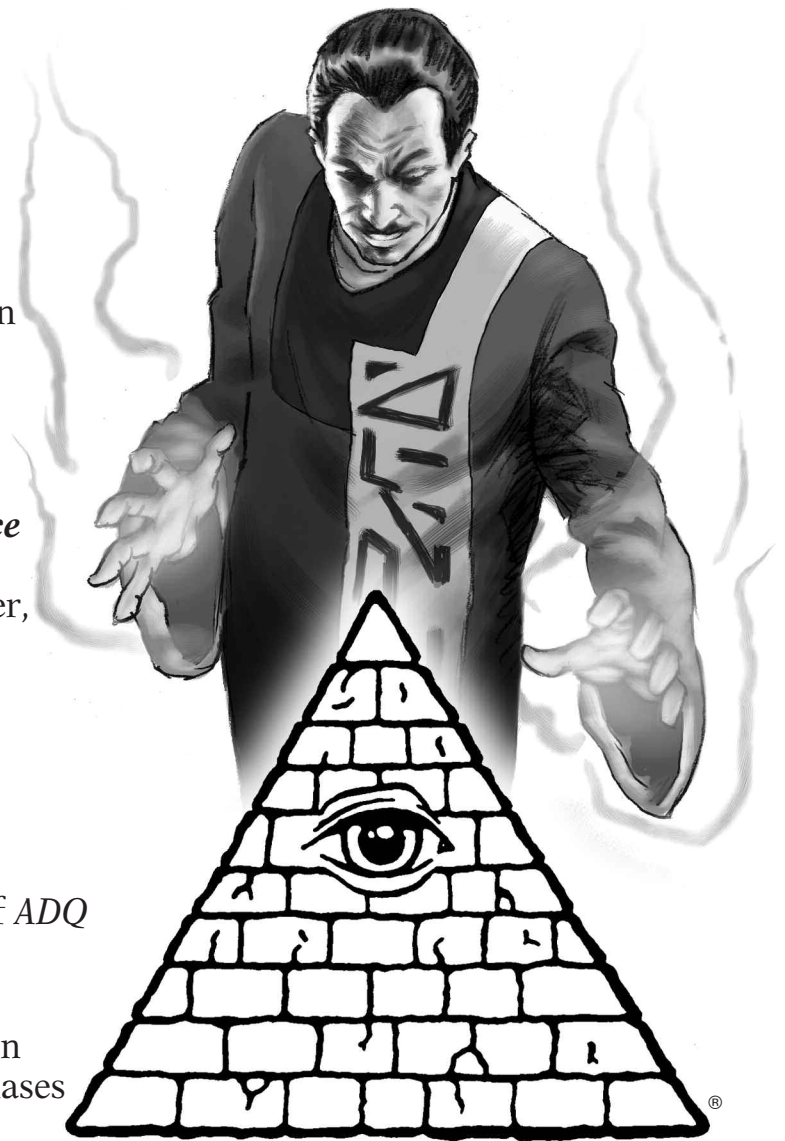


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