

THE DUELIST

C O M P A N I O N

January 1994

The Official Newsletter of the Duelists' Convocation™

Issue 5

The Once and Future Companion

Well, they've finally gone and done it. That's right kids, the WotC staff has decided that *Duelist* is going to come out six times a year instead of four. Not only that, but the issues are going to be on time. What that really means is that, starting in February, you will be getting much more of the information, art and fiction you crave, and *The Duelist's* skilled staff will double its migraine headache quotient!

As for your dear old Auntie Badger, well, I will still be here in the DC putting out *Companion* and making the world a safer place for axe wielding fiends...namely Steve, Corey, and Logan.

Companion, however, will now become a monthly publication and now that I seem to have assumed control we will be making some fairly major changes. To begin with, we want to reformat the *Companion* to feature more art (that is, any art at all). A new name will go along with this new look, and as soon as I come up with a suitably euphonious appellation for the aforementioned scandal sheet, I will make it known. I also want to bring you guys more "insider information." I feel that DC members are more than just *Magic* players, you are the keepers of the flame of *Magic* and as such you deserve to be treated specially. The quality of *Companion* will continue to reflect this by providing you with as much "members only" information as I can dig up (and

Badgers are very good at digging).

In addition we are starting up a column called "DC Questions." In this column the DC staff will respond to questions sent in by our members. Have you ever wondered how or why a certain card was banned or restricted? Want to know how the tournament rules are changed? Curious about whether or not we're actually in a band? Then drop us a letter. We'll select a couple of them per issue and run them, along with our replies, in a special section of *Companion*.

We would also like to remind you that we are currently soliciting articles from our members. These can be sent on Macintosh-compatible disk, hard copy, or via e-mail to me at badger@wizards.com. Articles should be about five hundred words in length and written with the more advanced player's perspective in mind. The *Companion* does not print fiction, but we are interested in humorous articles and possibly one-panel comics. Send *Companion* submissions to me at Duelists' Convocation, Attn: Rhias K. Hall, *Duelist Companion*, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707.

We would also like to run a column which spotlights the *Magic* arenas in your area. We know that many towns have coffee shops, malls, etc., where people gather to play and we would like to know where they are. Tell us about the place. Is it an all-night diner? Coffee house? Police lock-up? Be sure to include the address and the

times people are most likely to be there gaming, and we will select some of these to announce in each issue.

And remember, any authors we publish will receive some kind of cool gift from the DC. I can't promise anything specific, but I will try and make sure you get something interesting...heh, heh, heh...

Rhias K. Hall
Assistant Director

Jyhad™ 1995

by Matthew Burke,
Jyhad Project Coordinator

If you were wondering about the fate of Wizards of the Coast's second *Deckmaster™* game, wonder no more. WotC has a number of *Jyhad* products planned for 1995. Among these is a full-color poster with art by John Bolton scheduled to be released during the first quarter of 1995. Bolton is no stranger to the vampire genre: his exquisite paintings can be found on the covers of *The Vampire Lestat* graphic novel adaptations. Also scheduled for next summer is a revised version of *Jyhad*, as well as the game's first expansion set. *The Jyhad Pocket Players' Guide™* should be available by GenCon™, and a second expansion set will follow in October—just in time for Halloween.

Convocation Abroad

Many of you have expressed an interest in what is happening worldwide in the DC, so we thought we'd tell you what our distant brethren in the UK and Belgium are up to.

Duelists' Convocation UK is being headed up by "Red" Crowley. Red recently spent quite some time at the US office learning all about the trials and tribulations we face on a daily basis and teaching us how they deal with stress at WoTC UK. (Apparently, it involves something called "going 'round the pubs.") At the moment, Red is working out a comprehensive business plan, which, when complete, will give him the basis upon which he can build the DC in the UK. All of us here in the US offices have been helping him out with this when we can and we are proud to say that he has a true grasp of our "vision" for this worldwide tournament gaming organization. Hopefully, Red will soon be writing a regular column for *Companion* which will keep you posted on the goings-on at the UK office.

Henk Coppelmans from our Belgian office has just arrived in the US and is undergoing the same sort of training that we put Red through. (Unfortunately for Henk, the folks in Customer Service all got new Nerf weapons for Christmas so his training is a bit more rigorous than Red's was.) We are confident that when Henk returns to Belgium he will be quite prepared to undertake the monumental tasks before him. He will also have Olympic-quality Nerf-projectile dodging skills! He has been working very hard at starting up Convocation Europe and may be accepting memberships as soon as March 1, 1995. The first sanctioned tournaments should follow shortly thereafter. Henk will also be writing a column for *Companion* covering the European Deckmaster™ community.

We are working with the UK and European DC chapters to bring a more international feel to the organization. Part of this will involve setting up tournaments in a great many more locations and making these tournaments even more accessible to DC members. Right now the main problem we are seeing in the US is that we do not have enough sanctioned events to allow many of our players to compete regularly. We are hoping to overcome the problem here by making the sanctioning process as easy as possible, both here and abroad. In this way we will be able to provide all of our members with arenas in which to test their skills.

Sanctioning Made Simple

News flash from the Duelists' Convocation: Event sanctioning in the process of complete overhaul. Cats and dogs living together, missiles inbound to New York, film at eleven, complete chaos.

OK, things aren't quite that mixed up—I just wanted to catch your attention. The sanctioning section of the Duelists' Convocation has been in the throes of redefining its role within the organization. We are still streamlining the entire process of sanctioning your local tournaments, and want to bring you a revamped method of tournament sanctioning.

Starting in January, this new method will go into effect. First, you will contact the Duelists' Convocation at Wizards of the Coast to receive the Event Application form. When you receive the packet, read it over and fill out the application form. The application will request all the pertinent information needed for your event. Make sure that your proposed tournament meets the current standards for sanctioned events.

Mail the completed application form back to the DC, and we'll pick it up and begin processing it through our own little version of Mishra's Workshop. Don't worry if we call you back to verify some of the data; we're just trying to ensure that there won't be any problems further down the road for your event.

When your application is processed, we will send out a Confirmed Sanctioned Event packet. This packet contains your event confirmation letter, the current version of the tournament rules, your Certificate of Authenticity with your event number, and copies of the new tournament report forms for your post-event report to the DC.

This packet will give you everything you need for your event, at least as far as paperwork for the DC goes. At the completion of the event, fill out the report forms and make photocopies as necessary. Make a copy for your records and send the originals to the DC within thirty days of the date of the tournament.

To those of you who have worked with the DC before, this method should be familiar to you. If you haven't gone through the sanctioning process before, you should find it to be a user-friendly procedure.

The DC has also been in the process of redefining the area and region format for the entire North American competition sector. With

the completion of this project, we will be able to help organize more sanctioned tournaments throughout the US and Canada, and also more easily determine which areas might need some help getting started. The current goal of the DC is to help provide members with the opportunity to compete in sanctioned events throughout North America, with tournaments in as many areas as possible on a monthly basis. We will also be providing several variations for tournaments to provide different types of play and more opportunities for competition within a specific area.

All of these changes are making it easier than ever to hold a sanctioned tournament. As of right now, if you're planning to hold a tournament, getting that tournament sanctioned requires very little additional effort. You would first contact me at Wizards of the Coast and ask for a Sanctioned Event Information package. We can then send the package via mail, fax, or the Internet. After receiving the material, look it over, make sure your tournament fits with our sanctioning policy, and call if you have any questions.

Currently, we can only sanction one event in an area per month. I also need a minimum of eight weeks prior notification before scheduling an event. This time allows me to have the dates and locations of events published in the *Duelist Companion* and allows me to prepare for any help that might be necessary in the set-up of an event. In other words, two days before your tournament is not the right time to call and ask for sanctioning.

After you receive verbal confirmation from me, you are all ready to hold your tournament. After your event, you will need to send in a report that includes the following: a breakdown of all DC members and participants who were interested in becoming DC members, including their total points for the event, rounds played, and their final placement in the tournament (quarter-finalist, semi-finalist, finalist, or tournament winner).

So, there you have it—just a brief overview of what has been going on in the Sanctioning section of the Duelists' Convocation here at Wizards of the Coast. By the way, I hope you all have the very best of times during your holiday season. Take care and good day.

Corey A. Smith
Assistant Director

DC Sanctioned Tournament List

December 1994

Just2HaveACon
Quincy, Illinois
Dec. 30
Contact Tammy Davis (217) 224-3415

January 1995

Conjunction
Holiday Inn Convention Center
Springdale, AR
Jan. 6-8
Contact Hank Fawcett (501) 521-6910

Winter Blast
Sun Prairie VFW Post
Sun Prairie, Wisconsin
Jan. 7
Contact Wesley Beshears (608) 837-8519

New York Magic
Park Central Hotel
7th Ave. & 56th Manhattan
New York, New York
Jan. 7
Contact (212) 479-8488

Dreamation
Holiday Inn-Jetpark
Elizabeth, New Jersey
Jan. 12-13
Contact Steve Zatuchny (201) 942-8262

Domina '94
Birge Union, University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas
Jan. 13-15
Contact Chad Widup (913) 296-0489

Games University
Red Lion Hotel-Ontario Airport
Ontario, California
Jan. 13-16
Contact Jim Pinto 1-800-My Games

Winter Con
Bullpup-University of Minnesota-Duluth
Duluth, Minnesota
Jan. 14
Contact Jon Rowilson (218) 722-4210

Magic Tournament
Hyatt LAX
Los Angeles, California
Jan. 15
Contact Paul Matsumoto

Constitution III
The Best Western (Maryland Inn)

15101 Sweitzer Lane
Laurel, Maryland
Jan. 20-22
Contact Christopher Day (703) 527-7486

Magic Tournament
National Guard Armory
3535 W. Douglass Ave.
Wichita, Kansas
Jan. 21
Contact Steve Farrel

Magic Tournament: Return of the Empire
Dreamwalker's Coffee House
Boise, Idaho
Jan. 21
Contact Alan Cables (208) 465-3279

IMAGE CON I
U.A.W. Hall
1037 S. 30th St. Newark/Heath
Newark, Ohio
Jan. 21
Contact Mark Loughman (614) 344-5414

"It's Just A Game Folks" Tournament
St. Claire County Library
Port Huron, Michigan
Jan. 21
Contact Ted Golubinski (810) 989-2664

Magic Con II
Castlegate Hotel
Atlanta, Georgia
Jan. 21
Contact (404) 982-0227

Kaneda Con
Schilling Recreation Center
Kaneda AFB
Okinawa, Japan
Jan. 28
Contact Michael Nixon
(011) (81) (611) 734-3752

Mad Hatter's "We want at least a hundred players" Magic Tournament
Bash Riprock's
Lubbock, Texas
Jan. 28
Contact Mad Hatter (806) 763-4054

Florida Extravaganza
Orlando, Florida
Jan. 28-29
Contact Bruce Zalkin (813) 971-8686

February 1995

Life, the Universe and Everything XIII
Brigham Young University
Wilkinson Center
Provo, Utah
Feb. 1-4

Lexicon 11
University of Kentucky-Student Center
Grand Ballroom
Lexington, Kentucky
Feb. 3-4
Contact Tony Florence (606) 225-4639

Magic Tournament
Red Lion Inn
Astoria, Oregon
Feb. 4
Contact Mike Wangen (503) 325-8139
\$3 pre reg., \$5 at door

Magic Tournament
Cal State, Lester Hersh Program Area-2nd
Floor
Los Angeles, California
Feb. 7
Contact Joe Chora (213) 343-5110

Magic Tournament
Imaginary World's of Gaming
4500 East Speedway Blvd. Suite#15
Tucson, Arizona
Feb. 11
Contact Paul Nuttal (602) 326-7679

New York Magic
Park Central Hotel 7th Ave & 56th,
Manhattan
New York, New York
Feb. 11
Contact (212) 479-8488

PrezCon '95
Best Western Mount Vernon
Charlottesville, Virginia
Feb. 16-19
Contact Justin Thompson (804) 823-7433

Magic Tournament
National Guard Armory
1127 Armory Road
Salina, Kansas
Feb. 18
Contact Steve Farrel (913) 825-7341

Las Bois Arena
Dreamwalker's Coffee House
Boise, Idaho
Feb. 18
Contact Alan Cables (208) 465-3279

Mad Hatter's "Second Annual February" Tournament
Bash Riprock's
Lubbock, Texas
Feb. 18
Contact Mad Hatter (806) 763-4054

Victoria Mana Clash
St. Alban's Church Hall
1468 Ryan Street
Victoria, British Columbia
Feb. 18
Contact Don McCaskill (604) 595-8902

March 1995

Mondanro Con II
Franklin Pierce College
Rindge, New Hampshire
Mar. 2-3
Contact Brian Hess (603) 899-4200 x2021

Con of The North
Landmark Center
St. Paul, Minnesota
Mar. 10-12
Contact Kevin Matheny (612) 721-0089
General Con Info (612) 721-0089

Bama Con
Holiday Inn
Tuscaloosa, Alabama
Mar. 17-19
Contact David San (205) 752-0582

Gamers Con
Cherry Hill Sheraton
Cherry Hill, New Jersey
Mar. 17-19
Contact Nick Saur (908) 530-9378

Sim Con
University of Rochester-Wilson Common's
Rochester, New York
Mar. 23-26
Contact (716) 275-6186

Aggie Con
Texas A & M Memorial Student Union
College Station, Texas
Mar. 23-26

MAGE Con North I
Howard Johnson-Sioux Falls
Sioux Falls, South Dakota
Mar. 24-26
Contact Carol Gundrun (605) 334-2855

Conn Con
Hilton Hotel
Danbury, Connecticut
Mar. 24-26
Contact Joe Kozlowski (508) 563-6953

Scot Con
University of Wooster-Student Center
Wooster, Ohio
Mar. 24-26
Contact John Newman (216) 264-1954

Magic Con III
Castlegate Hotel
Atlanta, Georgia
Mar. 25
Contact (404) 982-0227

Technicon
Red Lion Inn
Blacksburg, Virginia
Mar. 31-Apr. 2
Contact (703) 382-0288

Delinquent report update

In our last issue, we ran a list of tournaments that we had not received reports from and the response was great. Since that time, we have received reports from many of the event coordinators who didn't have reports on file, and we would like to thank them for their prompt action.

The Duelists' Convocation had been sent reports for some of the events on the list, but those reports either never arrived at our offices or were lost before we increased our staffing. We also had difficulty with corruption of our filing systems and are still recovering lost data. Please contact us if you turned in a report for an event and the report is still being listed as delinquent.

Rbias K. Hall
Assistant Director

November '93

Shاونcon VII, Nov. 19-21
Kansas City, Missouri
Alan Grimes

January '94

Pandemonium, Jan. 22-23
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

February '94

Enterprise 1701, Feb. 5
Orlando, Florida
Sean Gentry

Ghengis Con, Feb. 18-20
Denver, Colorado
Lance Weber

March '94

Neo Vention, Mar. 24-26
Akron, Ohio
Gary Smith

TwisterCon, Mar. 25-27
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Craig Farrow

Conn Con, Mar. 25-27
Danbury, Connecticut
Joe Kozlowski

April '94

Attactics, Apr. 9
Aurora, Colorado
Lance Weber

DefCon, Apr. 22-24
Edison, New Jersey
Nick Sauer

VEISHEA, Apr. 23
Ames, Iowa
Andrew Akins

May '94

Magic Tournament Day, May 14
Austin, Texas
Matthew Huff

The Gamer's Con, May 14-15
Heightstown, New Jersey
Nick Sauer

Madison Game Fair, May 14-15
Madison, Wisconsin
Thomas Valley

Eclipse '94, May 20-22
Columbia, Missouri
Rob Nicholls

TwinCon, May 27-30
Twin Cities, Minnesota
Thomas Valley

GameX, May 27-30
Los Angeles, California
Jennifer Schlickbernd

June '94

Con Man, June 3-5
Manchester, New Hampshire
Joe Kozlowski

ThunderCon, June 3-5
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Scott Nicholson

San Diego Convention, June 3-5
San Diego, California
Jolie Mann

Tournament of the Month, June 4
Boise, Idaho
Shanandoe Brizendine

Magic Con, June 5
Fairbanks, Alaska
Pat Kennebec

FanCon, June 10-12
Houston, Texas
Eric Cox

GlathiCon, June 10-12
Evansville, Indiana
Nathan Byers

Reconn '94, June 12
Stamford, Connecticut
Mike Fitzgerald

HexiCon 4, June 17-19
Phoenix, Arizona
Dave Wolnik

Magic Con, June 18-19
Los Angeles, California
Jennifer Schlickbernd

Archon 18, June 24-26
Collinsville, Illinois
Paul Lilienkamp

Magic Tournament, June 25
Madison, Wisconsin
Reg Schmeichel

SCC Magic Tournament, June 25
Chicago, Illinois
Breeze Stoops

Magic Tournament, June 25
Topeka, Kansas
Chad Widup

July '94

Magic Tournament, July 2-3
Ontario, California
Jennifer Schlickbernd

Windsor Gamefest XXII, July 9-10
Windsor, Ontario, Canada
Darrin McConnell

QuinCon 9, July 15
Quincy, Illinois
Don Flinspach

Gobble Con 3, July 16
Easton, Pennsylvania
Mike Griffith

Can-Games, July 29-Aug. 2
Ottawa, Quebec, Canada
Tony Ladriere

Magic Tournament, July 30
Austin, Texas
Matt Huff

August '94

San Diego Comic Con, Aug. 4-7
San Diego, California
M. Craig Strockwell

ConStantinople, Aug. 7
Beaumont, Texas
Terry Stanley

Magic: The Tournament III, Aug. 13
Oshawa, Ontario, Canada
Kevin Coull

Magic Tournament, Aug. 14
New York Mills, New York
Austin R. Janowski

Please Name Our Tournament, Aug. 20
Port Huron, Michigan
Ted Golubinski

Magic Tournament, Aug. 21
Prineville, Oregon
Pierre and Sandy LaBaue

Sports Card and Comic Show, Aug. 27
Salt Lake City, Utah
Christian & John of Comics Utah

Magic Tournament, Aug. 27
Rome, Georgia
Gordon Lee

Tourn. of the Month, Aug. 28
Saratoga Springs, New York
Doug Chang

September '94

Magic Tournament, Sept. 3-4
Rome, Georgia
Gordon Lee

Mach I, Sept. 5
Omaha, Nebraska
John Geistdoerfer

CopperCon 14, Sept. 9-11
Casa Grande/Phoenix, Arizona
John Finnan

AndCon, Sept. 15-18
Cleveland, Ohio
Gary Smith

Magic Tournament, Sept. 18
Sacramento, California
Mark Christianson

Magic Tournament, Sept. 23-24
Quincy, Missouri
Gloria Hatt

Magic Tournament, Sept. 30-Oct. 2
Wichita, Kansas
Mike Brown

October '94

SodaCon III, Oct. 1-2
Gerald Lynn

Marmalade Dog Game Fest '94, Oct. 1-2
Kalamazoo, Missouri
Susan Haken

Magic Tournament, Oct. 1-2
York City Auditorium
York, Nebraska
Brian Emick

Hexacon, Oct. 7-9
Greensboro, North Carolina
Jeff Smith

Weekend of Magic, Oct. 8-9
Elizabeth, New Jersey
Steve Zatuchny

SuperiorCon, Oct. 9
Sioux St. Marie, Missouri
Angela Hooker

Magic Tournament, Oct. 15
Topcka, Kansas
Chad Widup

Atlantic Con/Bay Games, Oct. 21-23
College Park, Massachusetts
Todd Myrick

Something in Common

Variations for league and tournament play

by Richard Garfield

If you and your gaming group are looking to add a new twist to your games of **Magic** or **Jyhad**, try building decks from a common pool of cards. This helps create a more balanced play environment in which players who would normally have widely different card resources on which to draw can compete. Want to get people who are not into trading card games to try **Magic** or **Jyhad**? The shared pool method doesn't involve much advance deck-construction preparation on the part of the players, and will help keep beginners from being discouraged by a lack of cards.

Take a single pool of cards and divide it among the players. The cards you compete with can be one player's private reserve of cards, or contributions from all the players. If the latter course is taken, make a note of what people contribute so they can take the cards back. Alternatively, you can have players each put in a fresh deck or two, which can be used for several competitions, and the same number of cards randomly returned to a player when they wish to withdraw from the games.

Some people don't like having a shared pool of cards because they think it reduces the competitive challenge of deck building. If you think not having a jillion cards to choose from reduces competition, try taking a hundred cards and creating a deck with forty or sixty cards. Compare this with how your friends strip the same deck. If you have friends like mine, you will find yourselves in arguments just as vehement as with standard deck construction.

The key to using shared resources is to divide the pool of card equitably while allowing players the greatest freedom to build decks that suit them. There are numerous ways to do this:

Split & Go

This is the simplest method of dividing the cards: just shuffle them up and deal them out! Afterwards, strip down the deck

to the cards you want to play with. This mix can change between games as play see fit. If players want, a trading session can be called after the cards have been dealt out but before the games begin.

Multi-Round Draft

Deal out cards to the table from the common pool—maybe one more card than there are players. Each player takes turns choosing a card. After each round, the leftovers are discarded and the picking order of the players changes. It speeds up the draft and occasionally adds to the interest if more than one card is put in a stack, so the players choose between different pairs or triplets of cards.

Queue Draft

In a queue draft, each player begins with 60 points and buys a deck of 60 cards. First choose a maximum price for a card, say 7, and a player to go first, and turn over a card from the common pool. The first player may pay 7 points for the card or decline to buy it. If the card is declined, another card is flipped up, which costs 7 points to purchase, while the declined card's price drops to 6. Each player in turn chooses which card to purchase, if any, and the cards drop in price to make room for a new card from the pool. This continues until a card's price drops to 0; after this, players who decline to pay for a card must take the free one. As soon as a player has 60 cards he or she is out of the draft. (If you really want to give players a headache, force them to play with all 60 cards!)

Mix Master Draft

This method was developed to thwart "negative drafting," that is, the drafting of cards you don't really need just to prevent others from getting them. Whether this succeeds or not is open to debate, but it certainly makes an interesting game unto itself.

Put the pool of cards in a place accessible to all players and deal each player a stack of cards. Each stack of cards should be the same size, and each should proba-

bly contain the same number of cards as there are players. Each player draws 2 cards from the pool and adds them to the top of the stack. Each player selects a card from the stack to be in their private deck of 60 cards, and discards the bottom card of the stack to a waste heap. The waste heap should be either face up, or separated from the pool in some way. Each player passes the stack he or she has to the left. Stacks of cards will accumulate on the right, and when a player is ready, he or she grabs one and repeats this procedure.

It pays to think in this draft. Care must be taken when drafting the same types of cards as the person to your right, because you will usually only get second-rate cards. But the only way to tell that is by the content of the stacks being passed to you.

After dividing the cards, you can play any number of **Magic** variants. One popular game form which allows group participation while retaining a single winner is the round robin. Each player competes against each other player from 1 to 5 games (depending on how long you have). Players receive one point for each victory and half a point for each draw. Whoever has the highest score at the end wins. Ties can be broken by playoffs, or left as ties as players see fit. (Often they will see fit one way at 7 pm and another way at 4 am.) Or, if you are playing **Jyhad**, you can split the cards and just play one big game to decide the winner.

Once you have a common pool of cards there are all sorts of things you can do. For example, you can ignore the splitting up of cards altogether and just play a big multiplayer game from the same library. I have seen games played in which each turn a player had to put a card from his hand up for auction. The other players offer one or more cards from their hands to trade, and the auctioning player chooses between the bids.

Many strange, hybrid forms of **Magic** and **Jyhad** abound. Trying out some of these, like the single pool variations, on your own will both prepare you for them and help you to choose the most entertaining forms when you encounter them.

Magic: The Puzzling

by Mark Rosewater

(with help from Beth Moursund, Jim Lin, Tom Wylie, Paul Peterson)

“Roundabout”

Your opponent is Alysse. She’s playing a bleeder deck from hell. Between her Island Sanctuary and Island of Wak Wak, you haven’t been able to touch her (not that it would matter all that much with her Ali from Cairo). Meanwhile, she’s been draining you with both Karma and a Wanderlust. Then, as a coup de grâce last turn, she hit you with the last two cards in her hand, a big Fireball and a Black Vise. Cursing your Library of Leng, Wall of Ice, and four swamps, you realize that you have 11 points of damage headed your way this upkeep. Your task, if you should choose to accept it, is to stay alive this turn.

Wait a minute, this is the extra cruel Duelist Companion puzzle. Oh, in that case, go ahead and defeat her before her next main phase (without dying, obviously).

OBJECTIVE

**It’s the beginning of your upkeep.
Finish off Alysse before her draw phase.**

WARNING: My name is Mark Rosewater, and I am a sadist. There I’ve said it. See, my therapist thought it best if I took all this pent-up desire I have to inflict pain and focus it somewhere where it would get me into the least trouble. That brings us to this issue’s puzzle. I’m not sure if a word exists yet that explains the kind of torture this puzzle inflicts, but suffice it to say this puzzle is not for the beginning player. Or even the intermediate player. Maybe the advanced player, if they sign a waiver first. But even then, only under strict medical supervision. With trained paramedics standing by. That said, have fun.

ALYSSE (WHITE/GREEN/RED) 19 LIFE POINTS REMAINING



Black Vise



Karma



Mesa Pegasus



Island Sanctuary (activated)



Island of Wak Wak



Plateau

YOU (BLACK/BLUE/GREEN) 2 LIFE POINTS REMAINING



Basalt Monolith



Sol Ring



Forest



Swamp



Blue Mana (one cost)



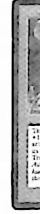
Library of Leng



Revelation



Crystal Rod



Ashnod's Altar

YOUR HAND



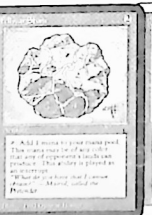
Juxtapose



Crumble



Fishliver Oil



Fellwar Stone



Magical

MAGIC: THE PUZZLING



Firebreathing



Ali Baba



Ali from Cairo

Holy Strength



Black Ward



Howling Mine



Hammerheim



Plains



Savannah



Hollow Trees



Battery

Hollow Trees
(four counters)



Pendelhaven



Underground Sea

Wild Growth



Swamp

Swamp



Coal Golem



Pestilence



Mord's Transmigrant



Sea Serpent



Ley Druid



Shanodin Dryads



Royal Assassin



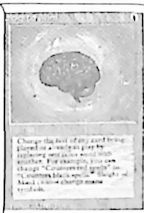
Wall of Ice



Wanderlust



Black



Sleight of Mind



Instill Energy



Flying Men



Creature Bond



Unholy Strength

Drawn this Turn



The Evolution of a Magic Card
Notes from the playtest team

By Jim Lin

I have always been amazed by how little prospective designers of Magic expansions seem to believe in playtesting. When we were still accepting outside proposals for Magic expansions, many of the proposals that were sent to us seemed to be based on the assumption that the process of designing a Magic expansion only involved writing down a card list and sending it to Wizards of the Coast. While it is true that I wish we had more time to playtest our Magic expansions, playtesting is an important part of the design process.

For example, in *Fallen Empires*[™] numerous cards were changed, sometimes in very significant fashion, due to the playtest. One of the more amusing examples is the Icatian Javelineers. When we first made the card up, there was no tap in the activation cost. You simply removed the javelin counter as a fast effect to do the one damage. Our original thoughts were that Icatian Javelineers was a pretty weak card, but about the right amount of direct damage for white, a color traditionally weak in damage spells. The initial playtest comments reflected this. Most of the people who read over the list complained that the card sucked, what were we thinking, etc. Only one person complained about the lack of a tap in the activation cost, and their complaint was that they found the power confusing since it didn't have any activation cost. They suggested something small like tap to make the card more clear.

However, a few days later, I got a post from Chris Page, one of the key playtesters for *Fallen Empires*. Chris' favorite color is white, and he is very sensitive about white being too weak, since in the early playtest versions of Magic, white was easily the worst color, and Chris ended up with a deck of white reject cards. He was one of the people who had originally complained that the Javelineer stunk. His post began something like "Icatian Javelineers is too powerful. Yes, Icatian Javelineers. One of my playtesters made the deck up. I didn't believe him until he showed me the deck." My first thought was "no way, what combination could possibly make Icatian Javelineers interesting?" The answer was, no combination. The deck he posted to me was something simple like 12 Plains and 28 Icatian Javelineers. He pointed out that while tap seems to be a really minor difference, it made a really, really major difference. Basically, the lack of tap in the activation cost made the Javelineers a really deadly weenie strategy. Generally, a weenie deck loses because

eventually some big creatures come out and kill all the little 1/1 creatures when you try to attack. However, with the Javelineers, what you did was attack with all the Javelineers, and after blocking was declared you could use the javelins to either finish off a blocker, maybe even blow it away without letting it kill the Javelineer it blocked, or to hit the opponent for that extra damage it took to kill him. Adding the tap to the activation cost removed this strategy and made the Javelineers a reasonable card.

Another amusing story from the playtest involved the Orcish Spy card. When we thought up the card, it actually let you look at the top five cards of any library. We joked that the card was a "really strong Glasses of Urza" since eventually you would not only know everything that your opponent had in his or her hand, but also everything he or she would draw for the next five turns. Again, it was Chris' playtest group that came up with the idea for this deck. Basically, Chris came up with the amusing idea of using lots of Orcish Spies and Millstones. What ended up happening was that by using the Millstones along with the Orcish Spies, you could make sure that your opponent never drew anything but lands after the third turn or so. Not too many decks can win under those circumstances. It really sucks to sit there and draw nothing but land while the Orcish Spies pink you turn after turn. As a result, we had to drop the number of cards you got to look at back to three, making it a lot harder to hose your opponent out of cards.

Playtesting can be a blast. I remember when we were playtesting the Thallids, we had great fun. At that time, we had some pretty amusing playtesting names for the new card types: Spormin for the Thallid, Spwumin for the Thallid Devourer, and Spwum for the Saprolings. While we were playing our Thallid decks to see if you could overwhelm reasonable decks with them, there was always an argument about who got to play the Spormin deck. Every time we got to bring a Spwum token into play, we all made a sound like "Thwuck." It was hard to tear ourselves away from playing around with the decks and go back to creating the rest of the *Fallen Empires* cards!

On the other hand, sometimes playtesting can be very frustrating, too. Due to time restrictions, we hadn't named all the *Fallen Empires* cards before the playtest started. As a result, we had a bunch of silly names attached to the playtest file. We sort of assumed that by choosing silly names (like Hymn to Bjork instead of Hymn to Tourach) that the playtesters would assume that these were just playtest names and not the real names. Many

of the names in the playtest file were obviously based on musical groups or singers, and they were chosen by what CD we were listening to at the time we typed in the playtest list. Unfortunately, this totally backfired. Most of the comments we got back from the playtesters seemed to be composed of things like "I don't like the name Tendervittle Mutant (we had called the Thrulls Mutants originally, and Tendervittle Mutant was the name for Basal Thrull). Also, I think that might be a trademark violation" and "Why did you name a card after the lead singer of the Ice Cubes?"

Another frustrating aspect of the playtesting is trying to translate playtesters' comments into game improvements. It has always surprised me how many of our playtesters comments seem to be based on mental analysis of the card lists rather than play with the playtest cards. No matter how often we asked them, it was very difficult to get playtesters to post the supposed "killer decks" they were building with the cards. A comment like "Hymn to Tourach is way too powerful" was rarely accompanied by "and here is the deck we used with Hymns that really rocked..." It is especially important to receive the deck, because that means we can reconstruct the deck at *WotC* and play it to give ourselves first hand experience about exactly why a card is a problem. This is as true when playing with the published cards as it is in playtesting. I would recommend to all of you that when you first get cards from an expansion, you don't just read the cards and insert a few of the new cards into your decks, thinking "that card is great, but I'd never use this card." With very few exceptions, you really need to play with the cards a little bit to get a good feel for how powerful they really are. I have always believed that the most important part of deck building is not thinking up the deck, but playing the deck a lot against all kinds of other decks and then tuning it based on how well it works. One way that I find works especially well is to play in a limited environment with a few of your friends. Maybe you each start out with one Revised starter deck and two *Fallen Empires* booster packs and make decks, (no tournament restrictions since you have so few cards; you won't be able to make killer decks anyway). Then play for ante. There is nothing like the fact that you're Serra Angel is up for ante to make you think up new and creative ways to use your Combat Medic.

You might have noticed above that when we playtest the cards, we do not assume Duelists' Convocation deck construction rules. The reason for this is that we would eventually like to alter the Revised lineup enough so that banned/restrict-

Fallen Empires Card List

The number after the Rarity Classification indicates the number of times that particular card appears on its sheet. For example, an Uncommon 3 appears three times on the Uncommon Sheet and is three times as likely to appear than a Uncommon 1 card.

ed lists won't be necessary to keep the play environment balanced. For that reason, we try to test all the new cards assuming a wide open environment, but not using any of the old killer/degenerate cards like Time Walk. When Ice Age comes out in the spring, you'll see our first attempt to provide you with a stand-alone environment that should require few, if any restrictions on deck construction to allow a balanced game that isn't a "flip a coin" game.

I'll leave you with one more example of how playtesting in *Fallen Empires* resulted in a card change. Orgg is one of my favorite cards in *Fallen Empires*. First, I love the name. Where we got it was the fact that Chris Page always used to mispronounce the word "ogre" as "orgg." We decided we wanted to name a card Orgg and make it really crazy. When we were first trying to figure out how much Orgg should cost, our attitude was "Orgg's disability is really bad. It not only can't block like Orcs, but often it can't even attack." As a result, our initial estimate of the right casting cost for Orgg was three colorless and one red mana. The initial comments of the playtesters who were reading the list, but not playing the cards, reflected this impression. We got tons of complaints that went something like "Orgg sucks. Everyone hates Orcs, because they really suck, and now you guys put out a cards that sucks even more than Orcs. What are you thinking?!" Our playtest, however, showed us that it was too cheap at that cost. Playing black and red with Orggs, Terrors, and red damage spells, gave you a pretty reasonable chance at getting rid of enough of your opponents big creatures that your Orgg could attack. Orgg was big enough that it was really difficult to kill the Orgg by throwing lots of little creatures in front of it, and the trample ability meant that throwing one little creature in front of it didn't help all that much. Furthermore, even when you couldn't quite blow up all of your opponents big creatures, the Orgg's "can't block creatures of power greater than 2" didn't prove to be that much of a disability. If you have a whole bunch of little creatures and one Obsianus Golem out, for example, you certainly aren't going to attack with the Golem and allow your opponent to attack with the Orgg now that your Golem is tapped. Trading 4 damage for 6 a turn is a pretty good way to lose. As a result, Orgg can effectively block pretty big creatures and flying creatures, even though it can't be assigned as a blocker to those creatures. That's why you see Orgg at its current cost. At that cost, I'm not sure if it is a great card or not, but I think it is pretty good. Of course, the only real way to find out is to play some more Magic!

	<u>Card Name</u>	<u>Rarity</u>
___ 1.	Aeolipile	Uncommon 1
___ 2.	Armor Thrull	Common 1
___ 3.	Armor Thrull	Common 1
___ 4.	Armor Thrull	Common 1
___ 5.	Armor Thrull	Common 1
___ 6.	Balm of Restoration	Uncommon 1
___ 7.	Basal Thrull	Common 1
___ 8.	Basal Thrull	Common 1
___ 9.	Basal Thrull	Common 1
___ 10.	Basal Thrull	Common 1
___ 11.	Bottomless Vault	Uncommon 1
___ 12.	Brassclaw Orcs	Common 1
___ 13.	Brassclaw Orcs	Common 1
___ 14.	Brassclaw Orcs	Common 1
___ 15.	Brassclaw Orcs	Common 1
___ 16.	Breeding Pit	Uncommon 3
___ 17.	Combat Medic	Common 1
___ 18.	Combat Medic	Common 1
___ 19.	Combat Medic	Common 1
___ 20.	Combat Medic	Common 1
___ 21.	Conch Horn	Uncommon 1
___ 22.	Deep Spawn	Uncommon 3
___ 23.	Delif's Cone	Common 1
___ 24.	Delif's Cube	Uncommon 1
___ 25.	Dereclor	Uncommon 1
___ 26.	Draconian Cylx	Uncommon 1
___ 27.	Dwarven Armorer	Uncommon 1
___ 28.	Dwarven Catapult	Uncommon 3
___ 29.	Dwarven Hold	Uncommon 1
___ 30.	Dwarven Lieutenant	Uncommon 3
___ 31.	Dwarven Ruins	Uncommon 2
___ 32.	Dwarven Soldier	Common 1
___ 33.	Dwarven Soldier	Common 1
___ 34.	Dwarven Soldier	Common 1
___ 35.	Ebon Praetor	Uncommon 1
___ 36.	Ebon Stronghold	Uncommon 2
___ 37.	Elven Fortress	Common 1
___ 38.	Elven Fortress	Common 1
___ 39.	Elven Fortress	Common 1
___ 40.	Elven Fortress	Common 1
___ 41.	Elven Lyre	Uncommon 1
___ 42.	Elvish Farmer	Uncommon 1
___ 43.	Elvish Hunter	Common 1
___ 44.	Elvish Hunter	Common 1
___ 45.	Elvish Hunter	Common 1
___ 46.	Elvish Scout	Common 1
___ 47.	Elvish Scout	Common 1
___ 48.	Elvish Scout	Common 1
___ 49.	Farrel's Mantle	Uncommon 3
___ 50.	Farrel's Zealot	Common 1
___ 51.	Farrel's Zealot	Common 1
___ 52.	Farrel's Zealot	Common 1
___ 53.	Farrelite Priest	Uncommon 3
___ 54.	Feral Thallid	Uncommon 3
___ 55.	Fungal Bloom	Uncommon 1
___ 56.	Goblin Chirurgeon	Common 1
___ 57.	Goblin Chirurgeon	Common 1

F A L L E N E M P I R E S

58.	Goblin Chirurgeon	Common 1	124.	Night Soil	Common 1
59.	Goblin Flotilla	Uncommon 1	125.	Night Soil	Common 1
60.	Goblin Grenade	Common 1	126.	Orcish Captain	Uncommon 3
61.	Goblin Grenade	Common 1	127.	Orcish Spy	Common 1
62.	Goblin Grenade	Common 1	128.	Orcish Spy	Common 1
63.	Goblin Kites	Uncommon 3	129.	Orcish Spy	Common 1
64.	Goblin War Drums	Common 1	130.	Orcish Veteran	Common 1
65.	Goblin War Drums	Common 1	131.	Orcish Veteran	Common 1
66.	Goblin War Drums	Common 1	132.	Orcish Veteran	Common 1
67.	Goblin War Drums	Common 1	133.	Orcish Veteran	Common 1
68.	Goblin Warrens	Uncommon 1	134.	Order of Leitbur	Common 1
69.	Hand of Justice	Uncommon 1	135.	Order of Leitbur	Common 1
70.	Havenwood Battleground	Uncommon 2	136.	Order of Leitbur	Common 1
71.	Heroism	Uncommon 3	137.	Order of the Ebon Hand	Common 1
72.	High Tide	Common 1	138.	Order of the Ebon Hand	Common 1
73.	High Tide	Common 1	139.	Order of the Ebon Hand	Common 1
74.	High Tide	Common 1	140.	Orgg	Uncommon 1
75.	Hollow Trees	Uncommon 1	141.	Raiding Party	Uncommon 3
76.	Homarid	Common 1	142.	Rainbow Vale	Uncommon 1
77.	Homarid	Common 1	143.	Ring of Renewal	Uncommon 1
78.	Homarid	Common 1	144.	River Merfolk	Uncommon 1
79.	Homarid	Common 1	145.	Ruins of Trokair	Uncommon 2
80.	Homarid Shaman	Uncommon 1	146.	Sand Silos	Uncommon 1
81.	Homarid Spawning Bed	Uncommon 3	147.	Seasinger	Uncommon 3
82.	Homarid Warrior	Common 1	148.	Soul Exchange	Uncommon 3
83.	Homarid Warrior	Common 1	149.	Spirit Shield	Uncommon 1
84.	Homarid Warrior	Common 1	150.	Spore Cloud	Common 1
85.	Hymn to Tourach	Common 1	151.	Spore Cloud	Common 1
86.	Hymn to Tourach	Common 1	152.	Spore Cloud	Common 1
87.	Hymn to Tourach	Common 1	153.	Spore Flower	Uncommon 3
88.	Hymn to Tourach	Common 1	154.	Syelunite Priest	Uncommon 3
89.	Icatian Infantry	Common 1	155.	Syelunite Temple	Uncommon 2
90.	Icatian Infantry	Common 1	156.	Thallid	Common 1
91.	Icatian Infantry	Common 1	157.	Thallid	Common 1
92.	Icatian Infantry	Common 1	158.	Thallid	Common 1
93.	Icatian Javelineers	Common 1	159.	Thallid	Common 1
94.	Icatian Javelineers	Common 1	160.	Thallid Devourer	Uncommon 3
95.	Icatian Javelineers	Common 1	161.	Thelon's Chant	Uncommon 3
96.	Icatian Lieutenant	Uncommon 1	162.	Thelon's Curse	Uncommon 1
97.	Icatian Moneychanger	Common 1	163.	Thelonite Druid	Uncommon 3
98.	Icatian Moneychanger	Common 1	164.	Thelonite Monk	Uncommon 1
99.	Icatian Moneychanger	Common 1	165.	Thorn Thallid	Common 1
100.	Icatian Phalanx	Uncommon 3	166.	Thorn Thallid	Common 1
101.	Icatian Priest	Uncommon 3	167.	Thorn Thallid	Common 1
102.	Icatian Scout	Common 1	168.	Thorn Thallid	Common 1
103.	Icatian Scout	Common 1	169.	Thrull Champion	Uncommon 1
104.	Icatian Scout	Common 1	170.	Thrull Retainer	Uncommon 3
105.	Icatian Scout	Common 1	171.	Thrull Wizard	Uncommon 3
106.	Icatian Skirmishers	Uncommon 1	172.	Tidal Flats	Common 1
107.	Icatian Store	Uncommon 1	173.	Tidal Flats	Common 1
108.	Icatian Town	Uncommon 1	174.	Tidal Flats	Common 1
109.	Implements of Sacrifice	Uncommon 1	175.	Tidal Influence	Uncommon 3
110.	Initiates of the Ebon Hand	Common 1	176.	Tourach's Chant	Uncommon 3
111.	Initiates of the Ebon Hand	Common 1	177.	Tourach's Gate	Uncommon 1
112.	Initiates of the Ebon Hand	Common 1	178.	Vodalian Knights	Uncommon 1
113.	Merscine	Common 1	179.	Vodalian Mage	Common 1
114.	Merscine	Common 1	180.	Vodalian Mage	Common 1
115.	Merscine	Common 1	181.	Vodalian Mage	Common 1
116.	Merscine	Common 1	182.	Vodalian Soldiers	Common 1
117.	Mindstab Thrull	Common 1	183.	Vodalian Soldiers	Common 1
118.	Mindstab Thrull	Common 1	184.	Vodalian Soldiers	Common 1
119.	Mindstab Thrull	Common 1	185.	Vodalian Soldiers	Common 1
120.	Necrite	Common 1	186.	Vodalian War Machine	Uncommon 1
121.	Necrite	Common 1	187.	Zelyon Sword	Uncommon 1
122.	Necrite	Common 1			
123.	Night Soil	Common 1			

Do you believe in Magic?

by Mark Rosewater

"Some Assembly Required"

I thought I'd dedicate this issue's column to an interesting take on deck building. Mind you that this is only one of I'm sure millions of ways to build a deck, but it's the one that I've taken a shining to.

About a month or two after I started playing **Magic** (back in the "alpha" days), I went shopping at a store called IKEA. For those of you not aware of this worldwide chain of Swedish stores IKEA is a revolutionary place where you get to buy all the pieces you want to make the furniture any way you want it. See, you can buy pieces A and B and then mix them with X and Y to create a piece of original furniture all your own.

To harken back to a popular term from the seventies, this is what's known as "modular building." The manufacturer creates useable pieces that can then be intermixed with any of the other pieces in the set. (Clothing's best version of this is the children's line called Geranimals.) Always one to connect whatever was going on in my mind to **Magic** (which has created some very interesting stories for psychoanalysis, but that's for another article), I said to myself, as one apt to talk to oneself in a large Swedish furniture store, "Hey, I wonder if that could work in **Magic**?"

So, I set about trying to find a way to create a modular system for **Magic**. Of course, having taken this much time for exposition, you know that I found one. After much study (consisting of intensive watching, playing, and discussing of **Magic**—hey, somebody's got to do it), I finally realized that the key to a strong deck is a very focused design that utilizes several intertwining themes (usually between two and four). A one-theme deck tends to fall short of the sixty-card requirement and a deck with five or more themes is too unfocused to be of any use.

Having isolated the theme as the building block of a successful deck, I started to compile what I referred to as "sub-decks" consisting of ten to thirty cards of one to three colors revolving around a single theme. For example, some of my early sub-decks were as follows: a black-green quick mana sub-deck, a red-blue direct damage sub-deck, a green weenie horde sub-

deck, a black reviving the dead sub-deck, and a white protection sub-deck.

The sub-decks were easy to build since each one had an extremely focused theme. Once I was finished making enough sub-decks, I began putting two sub-decks together to see how they worked. (I made ten, but any number will do. Just remember to use less colors if you're making less sub-decks) As a general rule of thumb, I tried to avoid creating any decks that went over three colors (but that was my choice, not necessarily a limitation of the modular system).

When mixing two sub-decks, you have to first weed out duplicate, useless, or harmful spells. Sometimes, you can add cards by increasing numbers of cards that both themes use. The key to blending any two sub-decks is to try and find the common ground the two themes have.

For instance, suppose you mixed the black-green quick mana deck with the green weenie horde deck. Both themes work off the principle of overwhelming your opponent with speed. Also, you will notice that a number of the quick mana spells (Sacrifice, Metamorphosis, etc.) make use of creatures and as such will be extra beneficial in this deck. These are the types of cards that you will want doubles, triples, and quadruples of.

Once the two sub-decks are thoroughly mixed, you can then add a third sub-deck if needed. (Say the black reviving the dead sub-deck.) Note that sometimes the adding of a third sub-deck will require adding cards you just took out or vice versa.

The obvious advantage to this modular building is three-fold. First, it will get you in the habit of making, clean focused decks. Too often decks fail because players muddy their decks by adding spells that are generally useful but detract from the deck's overall design.

Second, it will make you more aware of just what effects your deck has. And third, it makes the decks simple to adapt. If your opponent is knocking out all your little creatures (with say Pestilences and Earthquakes), substitute the weenie sub-deck with a large creature sub-deck.

Let me just end this by noting that although this may sound very easy, modular building still requires all the skills of any kind of deck building. You have to learn how to recognize good combinations and then follow through on using them in play.

WotC Presents

This is a list of conventions that WotC will be attending in the coming months. Any changes to this list will appear in future issues of the *Duelist Companion*.

January 1995

RiallaCon
Tempe, Arizona
Jan. 6-8

CES Show
Las Vegas, Nevada
Jan. 6-8

DalCon
Sweden
Jan. 6-8

RuneQuest
San Francisco, California
Jan. 13-16

DefenseCon
Chaddsford, Pennsylvania
Jan. 14-15

RustyCon
Seattle, Washington
Jan. 14-16

CenterCon
Kirkland, Washington
Jan. 15

CanCon '95
Canberra, Australia
Jan. 26-29

Conadian Toy Fair
Toronto, Ontario
Jan. 29

February 1995

Life, the Universe, and Everything
Provo, Utah
Feb. 1-4

American Toy Fair
New York, New York
Feb. 17-19

GhengisCon
Denver, Colorado
Feb. 17-19

OrcCon
Los Angeles, California
Feb. 17-20

RadCon
Tri-Cities, Washington
Feb. 24-26

March 1995

World Horror Con
Atlanta, Georgia
Mar. 2-5

LunaCon '95
Rye Brook, New York
Mar. 17-19

The Adventures of the Duelists' Convocation

as told by Rhias K. Hall

Installment #5: A Day at the Office (Captain Volume vs. P.M. Magazine)

It was a gray and rainy morning...but this is Seattle, so I guess it started out like any other day. I awoke from a dream that I had been taken to the Hard Rock Cafe and forced to gaze in mock-rapture at the petrified toenail clippings of Weird Al Yankovic. The dulcet tones of Ministry's "Stigmata" playing in the living room at 20,000 decibels roused me into semi-consciousness and I stumbled downstairs to make yet another unsuccessful attempt on the life of my roommate, Logan. Somehow, he managed to convince me to let him live—probably because he is my ride to work and if I killed him I would have to steal his car. I hear you can get in trouble for car theft.

When I got to work, I had the feeling that something was not quite right. Things seemed somehow different. I sat at my desk and pondered the intangible. When you work in the DC, you spend a lot of time pondering the intangible. It was not until I decided my pondering would be abetted considerably by a cup of hot tea that the full horror of the situation sank in. Something was indeed horribly wrong. The break room was clean. Not just tidied up, mind you, but spotless. No dirty dishes, no sticky spots of dubious origin on the floor, not even any of the usual scientific experiments in the refrigerator. (I often hear them scratching at the door when I start the microwave.)

Renee Shallis entered the kitchen. Renee works in marketing. I felt a cold chill as she fixed me with her icy stare. "The T.V. crew will be here in an hour," she said.

I knew then why I had slept poorly, why the Universe had chosen to make this

the worst hair day in history. P.M. Magazine was coming in... and I had the impression that they were not about to pay any attention to the "Crime Scene Do Not Enter" tape with which the police had so kindly draped the DC area on the previous evening.

They arrived at 10 am looking wide awake and far too perky for this particular office environment. After the initial Nerf™ barrage had ended, the news crew began to wander the office looking for a place to film an interview with Richard Garfield. As I feared, they spotted Puppy. Puppy is a large, winged gargoyle made of cement who guards Steve's desk. Personally, I think Mr. Bishop has seriously overestimated his need for a paperweight. The press converged like vultures, which was appropriate for the DC area which always is littered with bones anyway, and within moments the first of several tripods appeared. Soon it was looking like a low budget War of the Worlds. They summoned Richard and began the interview.

During the interview I sat at my computer and tried to get some work done. I noticed that it was oddly quiet in the building. I could actually hear what Richard was saying. Moments later I realized that the silence was radiating from the area of our customer service department. Now, despite the many evil things I say about them, Kyle and his crew do a great job, but they don't do it quietly. Especially not when Shawn "Captain Volume" Carnes is on the case! Shawn seems to think that telephones are for those who can't project their voices properly over long distances. Not only is the entire department usually tied up on the phones answering rules questions, but when they aren't on the phones they are usually shooting at one another with really loud Nerf weapons. (At the moment the weapon of choice is the Nerf Arrowstorm which combines range and accuracy with the rapid fire action we have come to know and love.)

Unnerved by this sudden cessation of

sound (and by the nagging urge to use alliteration) I crept around the back of my cubicle trying to appear nonchalant as I glanced at the deserted customer service bunker. Galvanized into action I raced around to the other side of Steve's office where they had massed their forces. Disaster was averted by mere seconds as I explained to them the dire consequences which would arise should even one arrow enter the DC work area. Fortunately for me, Kyle "Gizmo" Namvar is a reasonable man, a man who values his employees enough to protect their very souls from the dreaded wrath of Steve. He called off his forces. However, I knew that once Dr. Garfield left the safety of our area he was doomed. Dr. Garfield was aware of this as well. He has taken up residence under my desk and is surviving on a diet consisting entirely of stale pizza crusts and the occasional wandering insect.

After a while, the crew went to film in other departments and life returned to what passes for normal here. Captain Volume once again proved that electronic voice transmission is, for him, a moot point. I sat back at my desk (as much as I can these days... what with Richard living down there) and finished writing the next installment of "Are You In A Band?"

This month at the Companion Club: Rhias K. Hall, the Harlem hep-kitten; Corey Smith, the original Grumpy Troll; and The Songbird of Seattle, Mr. Jim Lin. Coming from a sell-out week in Vegas, Richard Garfield accompanied by the comedy stylings of Mark Rosewater. Editing and layout by the Tony(Petrarca)-nominated team of Kathryn Haines and Paul Hughes.

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You better believe it, honey.