

**NOT UP TO MODERN GRAPHICS STANDARDS  
#4-THE SANITY ISSUE**

**Game Openings in SUPERDIPPERS (Superhero RPG)  
(I am looking for another gamestart in either Diplomacy or a  
variant. Which? I haven't decided yet, but there will be  
only one new opening. Drop me a line if you're interested.)**

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**PERSONAL NOTE:**

## THE SEMISANE EDITORIAL

There are times in this hobby when I think that anyone who would give in as deeply as I have would have to be crazy. I mean, what sort of person would utilize dwindling resources, not to mention time and energy, to keep a Biplin going? Now doing something that others find incomprehensible is nothing new to me. But trying to get along in the "normal" world has been increasingly problematic, so it makes me wonder what I'm doing here.

Does this mean I am about to stage a spectacularly messy fold? Certainly not! I actually like doing the zine, so I plan to keep doing it for the foreseeable future. I've gotten along on tight budgets before, but I find my pastimes too valuable. Never mind that the average Jew on the streets would find it makes no sense whatsoever. (When you're on the streets, NOTHING makes sense). So I invest my time and energy in a totally different and thoroughly trivial pursuit.

And what do I get for it? That's a big question. Certainly not much respect. The period of tolerance may be ending, to be replaced by thorough dislike and severe loathing by Many Important People. And now I find myself accused of worshipping topsoil by everyone I come in contact with. And then there are feuds. OH BOY, are there feuds! It seems that every time I move I step into another one.

Well, enjoy this issue of NOT UP TO MODERN GRAPHICS STANDARDS. I hope people actually read this thing. . .

## THE LETTER COLUMN

((First of all, let me say right now that I am sick and tired of feud letters. Why can't people find better things to write me about? I haven't received one good theatre letter yet. Nor have I heard about any number of things about which I want to hear.))

((That said, on your marks, get set, throw mud!!!))

**ROBERT SACKS**·Of course Julie Martin is disruptive to Fred Davis' private hobby. She is the sole rightful Miller Number Custodian, she is independent of him and his cabal, she is pledged to maintain the independence of his office from him and his cabal, and she is pledged to maintain the no mandatory fee guarantee. In addition the numbers she assigns are shorter, simpler, and easier to understand. And they are not under Davis' control. She is also nicer than Davis and his bogus custodian, she hasn't threatened anybody, she's younger, and she's nicer to look at. She's also a better player from what I remember of a tournament we were both in.

Davis' question about what is to prevent people from setting up shop and issuing all sorts of home-brew Miller or Boardman numbers of their own is interesting because that is exactly what the North American variant Bank did. For years I have tried to negotiate with the variant bank cabal and their bogus custodian in an attempt to get them to abide by the constitutional restrictions that attached to the title they falsely claimed, to no effect. They only understood the threat of being driven out of business. What is to prevent people from setting up shop is what we have done: established a better custodian with a better title, abiding by the constitutional restrictions of that title, using a better system untroubled by the illegal acts of the variant banks, and with better permanent funding. And so Davis and his bogus custodian are losing and their actions are becoming desperate: threatening people, making scenes at hobby meetings, and issuing false proclamations reaffirming their bogus positions.

((You think that was bad? Wait till you see the letter from Sacks I almost printed. Speaking of which. . .))

**JULIE MARTIN:** You say Robert Sacks is spreading stories about "death threats". Of course, you haven't been around long enough to hear the "death threat" stories The Dark Side has spread in the past. I think Robert is making fun of The Dark Side, but Fred Davis is too literal-minded to realize the joke. It may take you a while to catch on to all the in-jokes and the lingo, but I think you're coming along nicely. Total immersion - sink or swim. You'll swim.

**FRED DAVIS:** Congratulations on being attacked by Sacks. As I've told many people in the past, that means you are now in the Big Time. ((Good, maybe now I'll get more readers. . .)) Anyone who is anyone in this hobby, from Walt Buchanan and -- Rod Walker on down, has been attacked by Sacks. Welcome to the club. ((Or should I say "club, welcome to the interior of my skull. . ."??))

**SIMON BILLENNESS:** Don't worry if you only have a few subbers at first. All you need is one game and a couple of pages of chat. Actually the main problem which faces zine editors is keeping their creations under control. It is very easy to overdo a zine in its initial stages by writing loads of articles and creating openings for lots of games. ((At last a non-feud letter! I am opening another game, but mainly for the benefit of people who've written me under the assumption I already HAD an opening. But this will still be a heavily chat-oriented zine. I'll try to keep it pared down to 16 pages if possible, but I can go 20 without doing real damage to my postal expenses (I think. . .) Keep writing, folks!))

## THE ESSAY CONTEST SECTION

I've always thought the best way to encourage articles is to ask for them. This is my way of doing that. But this first time I didn't have to ask. I just up and got one. So here is. . .

### A REPLY TO PHIL GEUSZ by Robert Grier, editor of OHIO ACRES

I realize Mr. Geusz was standing up for his job, and believe me I'm happy for you Phil. I don't think that US autoworkers are solely responsible for the decline of American Industry, albeit your figures of "\$2500" per unit for labor I never expected.

Let me explain my job, and then possibly see the reason for jealousy most Americans have toward autoworkers.

I make \$3.75 an hour, and work 50 a week. My benefits are -- after 1 year I get medical insurance for my family. That's it, no paid or unpaid vacation, no allotted sick days, no contract, no job security. I'm a thru and thru service worker, I pump gas. I don't mean a little gas, no way, our station meets the lowest price in Salem always. We pumped 117,000 gallons in June, I personally pushed 71,000 gallons. We have 2 guys on duty at all times and are a full service station, meaning I have to do it all; check oil, tires, transmission, power steering, and I have to look-up oil filter, oil grade specs and such. On an average Friday night (9 hr. shift) I pump over 3,000 gallons, sell 75 qts. of oil, check 40 tires, and eat 3 tons of crap from customers. My feet hurt constantly, and a gas headache is a constant. So hell yes I'm jealous.

Why don't I get a new job you ask? Because I just landed this beauty, a change from pizza delivering. When I went for my interview I stood in line with 14 other guys, two of which had a 4 year degree. I got lucky I guess, I landed the good job!

HARTMELL  
MILLER NUMBER 1987Urb32 or 1987K/ra  
Gunboat  
Fall 1901

STANDOFF IN ADRIATIC, BUT LOOK AT RUSSIA!

AUSTRIA: \*F ADR-Vent, \*A TRI S F Adr-Vent, A SER S A Tri  
ENGLAND: \*F ENG-Belt, F NTH C A Yor-Nor, A Yor-NOR  
FRANCE: A Gas-SPA, \*A BUR-Belt, F MAD-PGR  
GERMANY: A Ruh-HOL, A Kie-MUN, F Hel-DEN  
ITALY: \*A VEN S A Tyr-Tri, \*A TYR-Tri, F Ion-TUN  
RUSSIA: F Bot-SWE, F BLA S A Ukr-Rus, A Ukr-RUN, A Gal-BUD  
TURKEY: A Bul-GRE, F Con-BUL(ec), A Ank-CON

PRESS:

GM: The areas in capitals are where the units ended up.  
Failed orders are surrounded with asterixes. Sorry if this  
isn't usual practise, but my feeble printer can't underline.  
Darn.

BEFUDDLED FEUDEE: Well, if a third person claims to be MNC I  
may just end up with a number from them too. It can't get  
much worse than this. . .

GERMANY-FROG: I realize the move to Burgundy was merely  
defensive, a move from Bur to Belgium will secure our  
friendship.

GERMANY-ITALY: Tyrolis is a bad place for you army, the wrath  
of the Fatherland shall come down if Tyrolis is not vacated.

FRANCE-GM: Is this a black press game? ((Not that I've  
noticed. Until now, that is. . .))

FRANCE: In response to the unprovoked move of England, we  
have invaded Spais and Portugal. Asked by a reporter why  
they haven't retaliated against the agression of England, the  
Emperor Ralph said "Are you kidding? It may cause a bloody  
war and nobody wants that, but should they build in Liverpool  
we may be forced to react."

TRIESTE-ROMA: I have moved my capital to Trieste, just in  
case. Why make such a move? Nothing will happen, except a  
Turkish growth. Of course, I could go for that.

SERBIA-RUMANIA: Do you agree? Times will out: is her army  
trash? Tubs issue barbs! Trash rush among; Above bundles  
alit!? ((Sense none making!))

**ADRIATIC SEA-SYRIA:** Next up at the corner! Greece will remain open one more year, I think! ((You really think so?))  
**SILESIA-TYROLIA:** Keep pouring it on the gypsies -- they love it. If I'm here in '02, you get Vienna.  
**AUSTRIA-HUNGARY-ITALIAN EMPIRE:** Please note: One: I'm simply innocent! Two! Total another's 2. Three: Figs torn or tree -- Next?

**BRAVES-CARDINALS:** GO CARDS GO - we can't make it.

**PLAYER-GM:** Is spelling counted in law school, I'd be a pauper. Instead. . .why criticize? Get a secretary to spell; that's what I did! ((I had to change the dateline,

otherwise you would have given the whole game away. Gunboat is, after all, supposed to be anonymous. You stuck me with a real dilemma here, and I hope I took the best way out.))

**ENG-FRA:** See, I told you this was non-hostile. ((Sure it was. . .))

**ENG-BER:** You've got a deal. But why did you move into Hml. Bight?

**GM-ENGLAND:** It's pretty clear to ME what you mean by A Yor-Mor. After all, an army can't end up in a sea space even if it's being convoyed. But most GM's won't allow Mor as a valid abbreviation, so be warned. If anybody has any doubts what he means, let me know--you obviously can't ask him!

**THE GREAT TEAR-MAC:** I predict the following moves for this season--**AUS:** F Adr-Tri (S A Ser), A Tri-Vie, **ENG:** A Yor-Moy (C F Nth), F Eng-Del; **FRA:** F MAO-Por, A Gas-Dre, A Bur S ENGLISH F Eng-Del; **GER:** F Hml-Hol, A Rub-Del, A Bur-Kie; **ITA:** F Ion-Dre, A Ven-Tri (S A Tyo); **TUR:** F Cos-Dal(ec), A Bul-Dre, A Ak-Arn.

**TZAR-GM:** If I would've gained 4 builds, do you think the others would have ganged up on me? ((I don't know; hard telling with this bunch.))

#### SUPPLY CENTER CHART

|                        |   |    |
|------------------------|---|----|
| A: Vie, Tri, SER, bud  | 3 | -  |
| E: Home, NY            | 4 | +1 |
| F: Home, GPA, POR      | 5 | +2 |
| B: Home, HDL, DEN      | 5 | +2 |
| I: Home, TUN           | 4 | +1 |
| R: Home, SNE, BUD, RUN | 7 | +3 |
| T: Home, BUL, GRE      | 5 | +2 |

WINTER 1901 ORDERS DUE OCTOBER 8, 1987

TROUGHTON  
Regular Dip-1987HC  
FALL 1901

Austria-Hood: F Tri H, A Gal-Run, A Ser S A Gal-Run  
England-Cameron: F Nth C A Yor-Nwy, F Nwg S A Yor-Nwy, A  
Yor-Nwy  
France-Acheson: tA Bur-Belt, A Mar-SPA, F MAO-POR  
Germany-Holley: A Kie-Den, A Ruh-Bel, F Hol S A Ruh-Bel  
Italy-Noble: F ION C Apu-Tun, A Apu-TUN, tA VEN-Tri  
Russia-Oakes: A WAR H, tA STP-Nwy, F SoB-SWE, F Run-SEV  
Turkey-Slaughter: A Bul-Gre, A Con-Bul, F Bla S AUSTRIAN A  
Gal-Run

**PRESS**

**GM-PLAYERS:** Read the note in the Gunboat report to see how I deal with failed orders.

**PARIS-VIENNA:** Getting a little nasty in the early going, eh?

**PARIS-GERMANY:** This season will tell me what I want to know.

**GERMANY-ITALY:** I sleep like the dead. I've scared many a person by falling asleep quickly & being difficult to wake up.

**ENG-WORLD:** Prime-Minister Cameron wants nothing more than for all the powers to keep the peace, save GER & RUS; of which he'd like a "piece" of them.

**ENG-GER:** Actually, be assured, I'd never want a piece of you! I wouldn't touch you (or your country) with a ten foot pole. ((Well, will a 7-foot-2 Russian do? I could send you Sabonis, if his Achilles Tendon ever heals.))

**VENICE:** The Pope met with military leaders today, praying for victory in the cold war that persists between the calm and peaceful Italian people and the wild and war-like Austrians.

**ROME-PARIS:** Hopefully, the rumors circulating around the Vatican about a French offensive into the Mediterranean are greatly exaggerated. If not, the Pope regrets going into battle with another great country in which neither side will be victorious.

**SUPPLY CENTER CHART**

|                        |   |    |
|------------------------|---|----|
| A: Home, SER, RUN      | 5 | +2 |
| E: Home, NMY           | 4 | +1 |
| F: Home, SPA, POR      | 5 | +2 |
| G: Home, DEN, HOL, BEL | 6 | +3 |
| I: Home, TUN           | 4 | +1 |
| R: Home, SWE           | 5 | +1 |
| T: Home, BUL, GRE      | 5 | +2 |

**WINTER 1901 ORDERS** (retreats and builds) due **OCTOBER 8, 1987.**



## THE GAME REVIEW COLUMN

There is a new edition of PARANOIA out. As though Diplomacy players needed to buy paranoia; most of us have it already in one form or another. Besides, it's hard to review a game when doing so is likely to get any player-character reading it transformed into a thick yellow spray.

For those of you who are not familiar with this game, PARANOIA is set in an underground community of the future which is run by a cheerfully deranged computer. The player-characters are Troubleshooters sent out to find and destroy traitorous mutants and members of secret societies, a task made more difficult by the fact that the characters are themselves traitorous mutants and members of secret societies. Player-characters killing other player-characters is encouraged in this world, and backstabbing abounds. Just like Dip. The only thing that prevents the game from being morbid is that all of this is intended to be funny, so players find themselves being destroyed in a humorous fashion.

Still, this latest foray into Alpha Complex has been cleaned up considerably from the rather cluttered first edition. Skills are now on a point system rather than the infamous "skill tree". Characteristics are all rolled on a d20 (which is, for those of you who didn't know, a twenty-sided die), which can result in extremely high results and extremely low ones in the same character. In fact, EVERYTHING is now resolved with a d20. This reduces the number of extraneous dice floating around. It's still very, VERY easy to get killed, and gamemasters are encouraged to be nastier and wilder than ever.

The nicest thing about the second edition is that, at \$12 for the book version, it's cheaper than the first edition was. (It can also be obtained in a more expensive box form, but that comes with an extra fillerbook and a die, so it is not necessary). The disadvantage is that everything is now in one book, making dangerous peeking all the more difficult to detect and prevent (and making treason easier). But then everything is traitorous when viewed in the proper frame of mind, which is what paranoia is all about. **RATING (Out of 10): 9**

GURPS is one of the nicer systems on the market. You can read my general opinion on the game in PENGUIN DIP assuming Stephen will print it. Of course, in MY zine I decide what to print, so I will do a little more on the newest supplement, GURPS HORROR, with the caveat that you'll get a lot more out of it if you already have GURPS.

GURPS HORROR deals with the supernatural. Player-characters can now be hurled into the fray against monsters, vampires, werewolves, zombies, fungus creatures, witches and warlocks, psychotic killers who won't stay dead, and even Things Man Has Not Meant To Know. Everything in the genre can be gamed out, from Frankenstein stories to the

latest slasher pic. There's even a large viewing list at the back for GMs. And there is also some guidance for using simplified magic, adding psionic powers, and even making horror funny.

The biggest addition covers six pages that should have been in the game to begin with. This is the section on Fright. Characters who see something horrible, dangerous, or just plain icky (characters get extra points for being squeamish) now have to roll against their IQ to stay in control. Consequences of missing the roll could range from fainting to gaining some new psychological disorders (in the examples provided, a cop sees a corpse in the garbage and develops the Odious Personal Habit of everything having to be spotless before he'll touch it.) "Look! The giant space virus is blotting out the sun!"

The package also includes setting information for Victorian England, the Roaring '20s, and the present day. Just in case you're curious. . .

This package is almost worth getting GURPS for. But then GURPS is a good game anyway. If you already have GURPS, it's a bonus. (And, for the hundredth time, I don't know WHAT a Gurf is supposed to be!) **RATING: 10 with GURPS, 6 without.**

Given the resurgence in the espionage genre (see **THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS** in the movie review section), I had rather high hopes for the new edition of **TOP SECRET**. I used to play the first edition when it was the only modern-day RPG on the market. Now the market is very crowded with present-day games, and to stand out from the crowd takes some special effort. Alas, in that regard **TOP SECRET/S.I.** is a complete and utter failure. My chief regret is that I had to pay for it; I certainly won't be getting much use out of it.

This is a very cluttered game. Whereas most new systems are going back to using one or two kinds of dice, **TOP SECRET** uses types of dice there aren't even dice for. Characteristics are rolled on a d60(!), which is obtained by rolling a decimal die and a d6 together and using the d6 as the tens digit. And THEN you have to add 10. AND, once you have rolled your five characteristics, you add them all up, subtract the total from 275(!), and add the difference to the characteristics you rolled. THEN you have to do even more figuring and build your character's skills and disadvantages using a rather clumsy skills system that manages to be pretty much incomprehensible.

All of this would be forgivable if **TOP SECRET/S.I.** provided more information on playing in this genre. But the only intelligence organizations outlined are fictional creations of TSR. There are only statistics for ten different pistols (even **DANGER INTERNATIONAL** has more than that). There is nothing on special gadgetry. And combat is resolved using a very difficult system that even I couldn't fathom. And to top it all off the game comes with a pulp-era Illuminati novel that shows itself from the first to be in rather questionable taste.

My advice? Stay away from this game as though it had the plague, because it probably does. **RATING: 1.**

## THE MOVIE/TV/WHATEVER COLUMN

As has been made quite clear in a few recent issues of a few zines, James Bond is back. Is he ever! Timothy Dalton has excellent credentials as an actor: playing Shakespeare onstage opposite Vanessa Redgrave, for starters. Sean Connery took the part of James Bond and used it to make himself an actor. Roger Moore used it to make himself into a celebrity. For Dalton? Bond has given him instant acclaim and a well-deserved rest from the rigors of the artistic lifestyle (in addition to a handsome sum of money). We are back in the driver's seat, and soon on the edge of our seats. For **THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS**, Dalton's debut as 007, is one of the most exciting movies I have watched in years. It has everything a spy movie ought to have, including questions of moral ambiguity (Bond is, after all, a professional killer who happens to be employed by Her Majesty's government), and plot twists from out of the headlines.

What is more, you as gamers are in on a little secret in-joke. Whitaker, the arms dealer played by Joe Don Baker, is a wargamer. An acid portrait of one, at that. Look at Whitaker, see in him the one person in the Hobby you most despise, and you will get an extra psychic lift from seeing this movie.

My local county library is now serving the VCR population with free checkout of movies. This is needless to say quite popular, and the film department is now a cacophony of semi-organized chaos. They have many short films from their own collection which are not found frequently. **WHY MAN CREATES** attempts to explain the creative process in 25 minutes as well as convey to a hopefully young audience what sort of thing creativity is.

The library has done well by me so far. For example, they have a decent selection of the films of Akira Kurosawa, one of the great Japanese masters. I still haven't been able to get hold of **RAJ**, his latest and some would say most powerful creation. Instead I have been screening his earlier classics, like **THRONE OF BLOOD** (a samurai version of the MacBeth story), **YUJINBO**, and, most especially, **RASHOMON**, the film which lifted Kurosawa and the Japanese film community to the attention of the world. These films are out on video, but take a good deal of looking to find unless you too have a library which collects such oddities.

Enough of that. I am able, thanks to the library, to indulge another of my secret passions: Grand Opera! Within a space of three days I screened Puccini's romantic LA BOHEME and his fiery TOSCA. You want a villain? I give you Scarpia, the most black-hearted machiavellian fiend to ever express itself in a baritone voice.

Well, that's about as far as I can allow one column to ramble, thanks much.

#### **SUPERDIPPERS REPORT**

##### **BANK JOB FOILED!**

A bank robbery was foiled by the quick action of the silver speedstress known as the Dagger. Police say it took all of a minute for the speedster to capture the robbers, including a particularly nasty character armed with a rifle who threatened destruction at the head of a being "greater than you can imagine."

The newspaper reports that the Dagger was last seen thirty years ago, and speculates that someone may have inherited the Dagger's speed powers.

##### **CONFLICT AT COLLEGE**

A college professor is missing. Mr. Toad was investigating when he encountered an emotion-manipulating villain who calls himself Dr. Fixx.

The professor was studying genetics and superpowers, and a link between the two events is suspected.

**THERE IS STILL TIME TO JOIN THE CAMPAIGN. NEW CHARACTERS ARE WELCOME.**

## THE POLL HOLE

This is the hole for the Poll. That makes it a poll hole. . .

The results of the Runestone Poll, the hobby's annual self-examination (for whatever that's worth), are in. It's enough to make you wonder why you're reading the zines your reading; I don't get any of the top three.

COSTAGUANA, Conrad von Metzke's zine, won the zine poll this year by a good-sized margin. BLUNT INSTRUMENTS, a new zine from Bruce Geyrk, finished second with Alan Stewart's PRAXIS taking third place. The highest-ranking zines I get are HOUSE OF LORDS (6th) and THE CANADIAN DIPLOMAT (8th).

This was a good year for rookies in the poll. There were four rookie zines in the top 15, which is not bad for the newcomers. Some of them even trade with me. Amen.

NUTMG8 wasn't on the ballot in 1987, but pulled three write-in votes with a LOW mean score of 4.667. The scale is 1-10, with 10 being high. I take it that means I have some work to do. Let me know if you have any suggestions about how the zine can be improved; I don't promise to FOLLOW any of them, but it will be useful to know.

Some interesting notes: Robert Sacks' zine HANSARD placed 67th out of 67. Sacks in response doesn't believe in polls, and he did get an excellent rating as a GM so I thought I'd say something in his defense, or rather let him do it. "I have no doubt that substantial votes were cast against me by people who do not receive my zine, on political grounds." He also told me "If you use the polls your guide, not only will your zine be not up to modern graphics standards, it will probably be without redeeming social value."

Some other notes: CATHY'S RAMBLINGS, my personal favorite zine (besides my own), placed 14th. (TINE) LORDING IT, my Whoish subzine in LIFE OF MONTY, placed 17th out of 20 in the subzine poll, indicating there may not be as many Whoies in the hobby as I thought (or if there are they're not reading LIFE OF MONTY). It is also notable that high-circulation zines seem to place heavily over low-circulation zines; the Runestone uses a preference

matrix, which may weight the results a little bit. Cathy has a lot of readers. Andy Lischett, who doesn't even publish a zine, won the GN poll. And the Diplomacy Alliance Against Cancer raised more than \$1400 for the American Cancer Society on 441 Runestone ballots; probably the best thing to come out of this whole exercise.

Do I take the poll seriously? Can one take ANYTHING in this hobby seriously? I don't think it can tell us exactly what the best zine in the hobby is. Nothing can do that except the preference of the reader. What the poll does tell us is what a good proportion of the readers in this hobby prefer; which is as good an indicator as we are likely to get.

But I wouldn't let the poll dictate my reading if I were

you, because you'd then be missing out on all the little fellows who have done so much for this hobby. . .

#### A FEW FINAL WORDS

Look. I have this awful cloud of white space after the last article. What can I say in it?

I could say that I want you all to come back next issue. But you know that already.

I could say something thoroughly incomprehensible, like "What is Two?". Think about that for a moment. I used to take philosophy courses, so that became an interesting question. It was used to illustrate other questions to which we cannot really determine the answers.

I could ask you all to write lots and lots of intelligent and thought-provoking letters. But then my mailbox empties itself as it is.

So I think I'll just send you a hearty adieu until the next issue. See you then!

Michael Hopcroft

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