

THE GEEK GAZETTE



SORRY FOR THE CONFUSION

Last issue I made some comments about Margaret Weiss Productions that caused quite a reaction from several readers. It was brought to my attention that some of my opinions/information may have been unfair or incorrect. As regular readers know I try to keep what appears in the Gazette factual, plus I simply don't like to be wrong (not that it happens that often) and I feel they should be addressed. I reviewed my comments and while I don't think they were actually incorrect, I do feel that the statements in question were an example of poor communication on my part. So I am now going to address the comments and clarify any misunderstandings that may have occurred.

First I erroneously identified products from Margaret Weiss Productions, Sovereign Press, and the Dragonlance novels produced by Wizards of the Coast as coming from one source. This is incorrect, and that is my fault. I knew what I was talking about, and in my own head I tend to lump any product associated with Margaret Weiss as coming from one source. Just as I often associate Jolly Blackburn with most Kenzer products, that may not be right but as the "face" I associate with the company I tend to lump it all as one package. Now since none of you are reading my

mind (if you are stop it right now!) you could not possibly know that I knew what I was talking about. So I offer a sincere apology to you, the readers, Margaret Weiss Productions, Sovereign Press and WotC for my misrepresentation and rest assured that I will try to never do this again.

Secondly, my comment about there being too few Dragonlance gaming products produced wasn't exactly right or wrong, this one kind of depends on your perspective. I made this comment due to a comparison between Dragonlance and what I feel are the other two main D&D settings, Forgotten Realms and Eberron. Dragonlance has 19 or so products out, or scheduled for release, while FR has over 30 and the much younger Eberron setting has at least 20 and growing. So by comparison there isn't as much Dragonlance material out there for the current D&D system. To me it seems disproportionate given the age of the setting. Now I realize this observation can be seen as wrong or as my opinion

(most articles in the Gazette are the opinions of myself or a contributor) and depends on what you feel is too much or too little. While I would like to see more Dragonlance material, others may feel there is too much Forgotten Realms material out there. So while my comment isn't exactly wrong, it was wrong of me to phrase it the way I did without clarifying the meaning. Again I apologize and will consider my statements more carefully in the future.

The last comment received the fewest reader responses but I think pretty much anything that causes a reader to feel the need to take time out of his/her day to personally, and intelligently comment on deserves a response. So in regards to my complaints about the lack of Serenity material, it was pointed out to me that the reason there are so few Serenity products is because of licensing issues. In my defense I have sent a few emails to the powers that be regarding the lack of supplemental

Sorry

Continued from page 1

products and received no response. Also I have not seen an official statement regarding this topic, a statement to this effect may exist but I have not seen it, so I can not confirm or deny this as fact at this time.

Since I am in a generous mood I am also willing to offer an apology if it turns out that licensing issues are the reason for delaying Serenity supplements; although I do still feel the setting has likely been put on the back burner, but that's just my opinion.

On the plus side no one disagreed with my comment that the products produced by MWP, or SP are high quality, and no one disagreed with my complaints regarding the Battlestar Galactica RPG delays. I have never received so many emails that focused on one particular issue and to be honest I appreciate the fact so many people feel this strongly about their favorite games and gaming companies. This passion is one of the things I love about being part of the gaming community.

We love our games and we are not afraid to let people know when we disagree with something they say or write.

Now that the apologies and clarifications are out of the way it's time to get on with this Summer Special Edition of The Geek Gazette. This is the smaller, fill in issue between the June/July issue and the August/September Gen Con issue and while it may not have as many pages I think the content is as good as last issue. Of course I am biased and think that about every issue, but I still think you'll enjoy it.

Well the sun is shining and the grass needs to be mowed, so if I don't see you at Gen Con, I'll see you back here next issue.



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Devils Due Press

The Prefect Campaign

Maybe once in a GM's life they will have that one campaign that they and the players will never forget, their Mona Lisa, the highlight of their GMing career; some call them legendary campaigns but we called ours the perfect campaign.

A perfect campaign is one that keeps the players begging for more, people who have never played it know about it and for those involved few if any other games will ever be quite as good. While some groups may never give the GM the satisfaction of saying the campaign was perfect, everyone involved will know if it happens.

While any smart GM will take credit for the brilliance of this campaign when it happens, a good GM knows that they only played a small, but significant, part in making it great. It takes the right mixture of ideas, a lot of quick thinking, preparation and of course just the right player mood and chemistry.

My perfect campaign happened right after D&D 3e came out and I found

myself as the newly christened GM for my new gaming group. The group was small consisting of myself and 4 players (there were 3-4 other players that would drift in from time to time but I'm focusing on the core group) who were still using 2e and had been gaming together for quite a while. I had only sat in with them a few times and other than that hadn't really played for years. I little intimidated to say the least. Yet here I was, the new kid on the block, taking over **their** group and introducing new rules. I knew my first run had to be something big or else they might not trust me to GM again, so I had to pull out all the stops.

I spent nearly a week just coming up with the ideas and fleshing out the campaign setting before I even started putting the first session together. I did the standard GM prep, creating NPC's, preparing encounters and coming up with the most brilliant villain ever, or so I thought at the time. Game night came and after converting some of their

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The Prefect Campaign continued from page 2

2e characters to 3e we ventured into the homebrew campaign that eventually came to be known as the 5 towers.

Before I get into the specifics of the game, I would like to give you a little insight into this campaign. The back story for the 5 towers was a little convoluted to say the least. The old gods created the universe, and then they created the elder races (dragons, elves, etc). The gods felt that something was missing because there was no race that truly conveyed the brilliance of the gods, so they created man. Well the ruler of the gods had two sons, one was very wise and would one day take his father's place as ruler of the gods. The other son was a selfish, little brat who despised his brother. The brat decided that since man was favored by the gods he would turn them against the other gods. So he went down and started pointing out to the humans that if they were favored by the gods then why weren't they as powerful as the dragons, and why didn't they live as long as the elves. Being the conniving brat he was, he also worked to make the elder races jealous of the human's since they were favored, yet were "inferior" to the elder races. Of course everyone began to question the gods and the races declared war on each other. All the while the bratty god was conspiring with some evil outsiders to invade the gods' domain so he could take over. Then, as the gods dealt with the war between all the races, the bratty god and his army of outsiders stormed

the gods' domain and attempted to overthrow his father.

Once the races were placated, and the outsider invasion was driven back the king of the gods turned his sights on his treacherous child. As punishment he took his son down to "earth" and in front of all the races he broke him into 5 pieces and placed each piece into a crystal. Each piece contained a portion of the bad son's godly knowledge and powers and the only way his son could be made whole was by brining the crystal together. Each of these 5 crystals were placed in one of 5 towers, each tower had a key that the gods hid. As if this all wasn't complicated enough, the gods placed each of the towers and each of the keys in different dimensions/realms that they controlled. Then to make it even harder to rejoin the pieces each tower and each key would periodically shift to a different dimension, but no single piece would never appear in the same dimension as another piece, so the gods thought for sure that there was no way for the bad son to every be made whole.

Jump ahead quite a

few years to a magic school where a young mage finds a tome with the details of the events I have just described. He is intrigued and wants to harness the bad son's powers for his own. So like any good villain, he is obsessed with his quest and becomes an evil wizard in the process. Just as he is on the cusp of finding the first key our heroes are recruited by the gods to stop him.

In hindsight I can see that my main villain and even the campaign itself was mediocre at best. I tried too hard to come up with a great idea and honestly ended up with a complicated back story (believe me the version you have just read is an overly simplified version) and a crappy, cardboard villain. If someone else had told me this idea I would have told them it was too complicated and the villain was too bland. How did this become my perfect campaign you ask? The thing that elevated this campaign to legendary status for our group was

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The Podcast Page

Just a few of the Podcast that I recommend and try to listen to regularly. All podcasts featured anywhere in the Gazette should be available for download on the shows website or from iTunes; unless noted otherwise.



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The podcasts for lovers of the mythic arts.



<http://decoderringtheatre.com>



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some quick thinking on my part, the NPC's, supporting villains and the brilliant, often hilarious, role-playing by the group.

The first hour or so of the game was honestly less than great, in truth it stunk. Everyone was brought together and naturally accepted the quest, gathered their gear and went on their merry way. They found out which key the evil wizard was going after (you had to have a key before you could unlock the corresponding tower) and decided to beat him to it. Of course they were too late, but this is where things got interesting. While racing to find the first key they stumbled upon a laboratory. The place was cov-

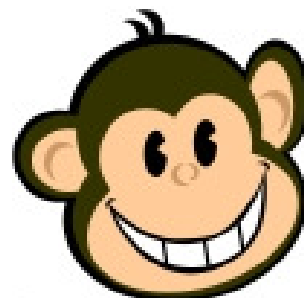
ered in blood and body parts were scattered everywhere. As the group's wizard and necromancer scoured the area looking for anything of use, two small children entered the room. They told the group how they had come in search of their parents who had been kidnapped and brought here and asked the group to help them. Naturally the group agreed, and boy did they regret that.

Soon the group found themselves being tortured by the two children who ended up being two of the most sadistic villains I have ever created. I won't go into any details about what happened but needless to say if I ever needed to get the player's attention in future campaigns, all I

had to do was mention the fact there were children present. I may have gone a little over the top with these two but they definitely left their mark on the group, in more ways than one.

The PC's managed to escape using team work and a lot of dumb luck only to end up watching the first tower disappear just as they reached the door. (Each time you unlocked a tower it would return to the spot where the bratty god was ripped to pieces.) This is when someone in the group had an idea. Instead of racing to keep the bad guy from making off with the towers, they should just go after the keys that the villain hadn't gotten yet and hold on

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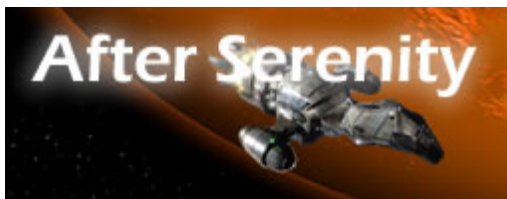
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to them. Everyone agreed and once they found his next target they went in the opposite direction.

From a GM's point of view this was brilliant move on their part as it turned the tables and forced the villains to start chasing them. The PC's ended up being the ones on the run and it led to some great chases, unforgettable battles and most of all some of the best role-playing I have had the good fortune to encounter. Now the demon twins, as they came to be known, were not the only memorable NPC/supporting villains I pulled out of my bag of tricks. The group's emissary to the gods had a twin sister who worked for the other team and when the evil twin impersonated her sister to throw the group off track they began to distrust everyone, which created a lot of conflict and kept the group on edge. They encountered a "friendly" vampire who informed the group they were not the first, but the third group the gods had

recruited for this quest. With the exception of the vampire all the other groups had perished, which made the group distrustful of the whole mission and question their chances of success. So again some one had the idea that they should one up everyone else and keep the towers for themselves and again they all agreed. (This group never played truly good PC's) Now they were not only trying to keep the first villain from attaining the keys but also the new group the gods had recruited to stop them; no matter where they went someone was after them.

This campaign went on every weekend, and some week nights, for nearly three months and only continued to improve each session. In that time I threw everything I could at them, I had the group change bodies with some of the main villain's minions, one member of the group even sacrificed themselves and remained in the body of a goblin just to return the others to their rightful forms. They got caught in the

middle of a dragon war, one PC became a vampire and was subsequently beheaded by another PC (they were later brought back), they battled evil copies of themselves, one PC was cursed with killer BO, they found creative uses for a mirror that would randomly teleport them to another dimension and fought valiantly in the final battle between all the various factions.

For my first run as a GM in this group I was proud of what we had created and no game since has had quite the same spark. Sure there were other fun campaigns, and a few that I would venture to say were great, but none were quite as perfect as the 5 towers.

As time went by problems arose within the group, and players began to move on, some even quit gaming completely. Every once in a while some of us would get together and try to get things going again, but something always got in the way. Often during these get togethers, usually when there was a new player to impress, someone would bring

up the 5 towers and all of our faces would light up as we told old "war stories". We even tried to play through it again, to let the new kids see what a great campaign really was, but it was never the same.

Eventually I took the campaign notes and filed them away in my closet, but occasionally I drag them out, read them and reminisce. There was something magical about that campaign and that group. Somehow we took a mediocre campaign and turned it into something great, something that all of us were a part of and that will forever live on in our memories. As a GM or even as a player I may never be fortunate enough to find that perfect mix again, but I count myself as one lucky gamer for being there, when the stars were just right and we played the perfect campaign.



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Rumors & News

- A Justice League Movie is in the works and it is rumored that Routh and Bale have been approached to appear as Superman and Batman.
- Is it just me or is that geek favorite Jonathan Coulton's song Code Monkey they are using as the theme for G4's new show titled... Code Monkey
- Both Marvel and DC are working on releasing MMO games in the vein of City of Heroes.
- DC's Lightning Saga storyline that ran through JSA & JLA all but told fans that Barry Allen would be returning to the DCU, instead we got Wally West... again. Plus his entire family is back, half grown kids and all. What the?
- The latest Flash series has apparently ended with issue 13, as they have killed, supposedly, the star of the book Bart Allen. But fear not Wally will reclaim the mantle of Fastest Man Alive in an all new series titled... All Flash? What kind of name for a book is that? Does it mean no one else will appear but the Flash? The preview is up on DC's website now and it looks to have a pretty Po'd Wally going after those responsible for Bart's demise.
- A live action Avengers movie is in the works and guess who was asked to play Nick Fury? Sam Jackson, the inspiration for Marvel's Ultimate version of the character. It would be pretty cool to see some cameos like the Punisher's appearance in Spiderman 2. Of course I am more interested in seeing who will play Thor and Captain America.
- Rumor has it that talks are already underway for a Ghost Rider 2. Though the first one did well at the box office, many fans were not pleased with the movie and the powers that be claim to be listening to fan response. There are various claims (not confirmed) that studio insid-



www.captaincanuck.com

Official Site of Captain Canuck

News & Rumors continued

ers and the director himself have said the next film will be done "right". Hope springs eternal...

- Firestorm ended with issue 35. Rumors have been flying about big things for the Nuclear man. Perhaps the return of the original??
- Now that there are 52 DC universes, one of which is populated by the Carlton characters, rumors have been flying about the return of the "real" Blue Beetle. Though everyone seems divided as to whether it will be Dan Garrett or Ted Kord.
- In New Avengers 31 it was revealed that Electra was actually a Skrull!!!! Who else in the Marvel U is secretly a Skrull? Rumor has it this will be Marvel's next big event after the that Hulk war thing. Could the whole Civil War have been an elaborate Skrull conspiracy? Is Stark a Skrull? Was Captain America really a Skrull? If so is the real Cap still alive? Only time will tell true believers.
- Comic book fan Nicholas Cage



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Do you have questions or comments you would like to share? Any stories or topics you would like to see covered or added to the Gazette? Want to contribute a story to the Gazette? Then feel free to let us know.

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DC'S KING OF THE BIG EVENTS?

For the past few years I think it is safe to say that DC comics has reigned supreme in regards to the yearly big event. From Identity Crisis to Countdown DC has been drawing in fans and causing controversy on a regular basis.

I may not have agreed with all the killing and mind wiping that has been going on for the past few years but for the most part the stories have been pretty good. I enjoyed 52, mostly because I'm sick of the big 3 starring in everything and usually root for the second stringers, plus the various story lines were fairly interesting. However I was disappointed, in a big way, with WWIII and Amazons Attack. Both were crappy stories at best, that I felt were not only lame but served no real purpose.

Every attempt may not have been golden but at least you can say that DC has been trying. Fans, like myself, may not like all their decisions, but these events are getting noticed and hopefully bringing in new readers. But when the dust settles and all is said and done, has DC made the right choices or are they making changes just for the sake of change?

At the end of 52 we saw the return of the multiverse and I for one was glad (I don't know why, but I was). Then I started seeing and reading about the repercussions this would have and my smile quickly turned upside down. We had the original Crisis on Infinite Earths and subsequent Zero Hour in an attempt to create a sensible continuity and now I find they seem to have decided to throw out the

past 20 years! Here's a quick run down of some of the changes I have seen or heard about and some of the screwy things I've noticed in the DCU.

1. Superman's history has been retconned once again and now he operated as Superboy when he was young. *This seemingly negates the whole reason for Conner's existence and recent death.*
2. Superman, as Superboy, was a member of the Legion of Superheroes.
3. There are 2 versions of the Legion of Superheroes running around the DCU???
4. All of the ridiculous different colors of Kryptonite will be returning to continuity.
5. Superboy Prime's super punch resurrected Jason Todd?? *Who's bright idea was it to bring back a character that fans voted to kill?!*
6. Now there was apparently no Superboy Prime; he's now Superman Prime. What the??
7. Jimmy Olsen has superpowers.
8. The New Gods are supposedly cool and interesting. *When the @#\$\$did that happen?!*
9. Everyone, including Jimmy Olsen and the staff of the Daily Planet, knows Jason Todd's real name, that he was at one time Robin and that he was killed by the Joker.
10. Everyone also apparently knows that Nightwing is Dick Grayson and was the first Robin, but no one has figured out that Bruce

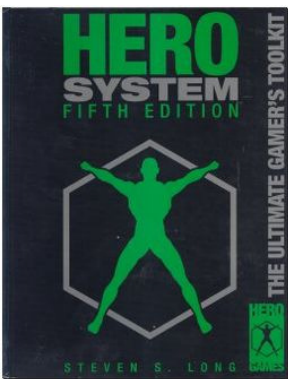
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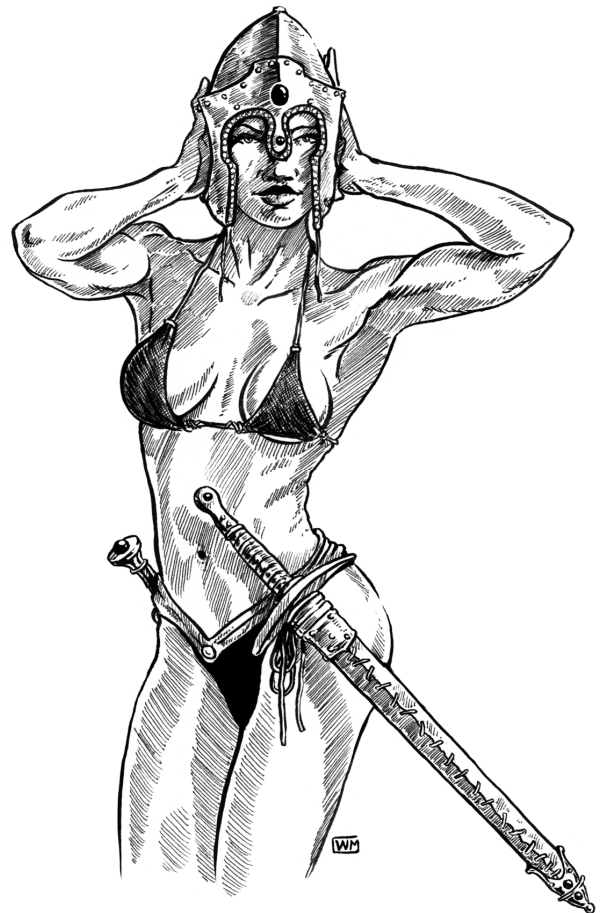
DC BIG EVENTS
 CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Wayne is Batman!!!!
*What kind of reporters
 are these people?!*

11. Lex Luthor is back in his horrendously ugly Super Friends outfit.
12. How many Supergirls are there anyway?
13. Powergirl is a Kryptonian from a parallel Earth and she knows it! *For now anyway.*
14. Captain Marvel is the new Shazam and Captain Marvel Jr. is the new Captain Marvel.
15. Mary Marvel has Black Adams powers and a skimpy new black outfit.
16. Aquaman has turned into an H.P. Lovecraft reject and there is a new, younger Aquaman.
17. The new Flash, Bart Allen, is dead (after only 13 issues) and Wally West is back.
18. Wally hadn't been



<http://accidentalsurvivors.libsyn.com/>



Fantasy Clip Ink: Warriors Set 1

This month's image courtesy William McAusland and the gang over at Outland Arts
www.outlandarts.com

DC Big Events continued from page 9

back among the living for 2 seconds when he was offered and accepted membership in the JLA.

19. Green Arrow and Black Canary are getting married.
20. One of the versions of the Legion of Superheroes came back in time to resurrect the Flash. DC all but tells fans it is Barry Allen and who pops up? Wally West, his wife and his two half grown kids! *I for one never understood how, when he was racing into the Speed Force, he was able to make a pit stop to collect his family.*
21. The Green Lanterns aren't the only ones with power rings. *Now they come in three fruity colors. Lime Green, Banana Yellow and Plum Purple????*
22. Kyle Rayner is the Green Lantern from another Earth.
23. DC finally got its wish and made Captain Atom become Monarch. *What is it with DC and the old Carlton characters. They either sweep them under the rug, kill them or turn them into bad guys?*
24. Now that there are 52 universes there are 52 Monitors. *Does that mean there are 52 Anti-monitors as well?*
25. Captain Carrot is coming back.
26. Donna Troy was supposed to die in place of Jade and she will become a major female character in the DCU.
27. The new Blue Beetle will join the Teen Titans.
28. Booster Gold is getting his own book and will serve as a sort of a time/dimensional cop.

29. The past 20 years of continuity is up for grabs and can be re-written to fit the new, screwy continuity.

And the upside to all this crazy continuity and ret conning.....

30. We get to have Earth-1, Earth-2 team ups again.

I don't know what DC plans are and from what I have read in the Countdown series I'm not sure they do either. Unless they pull some pretty nifty rabbits out of their hats I think all that they will accomplish is driving away long time fans and creating a continuity that will be hard for new readers to grasp.

I hope, as a life long DC fan, that I am wrong, but given some of what I have seen on the message boards I tend to think I'm not. Already long time readers are scratching their heads, some even calling for Didio to be removed from DC over recent events. Maybe it's just us old timers trying too hard to hold on to the past, but I am having a hard time seeing the reasoning behind the current decisions of the DC editorial and creative staff.

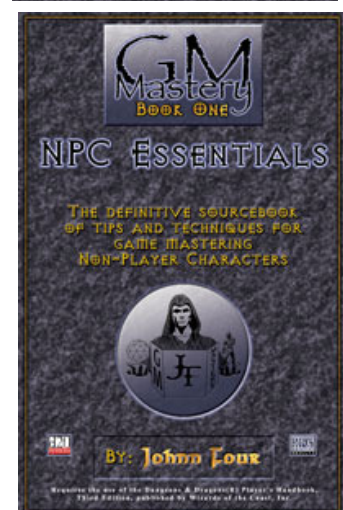
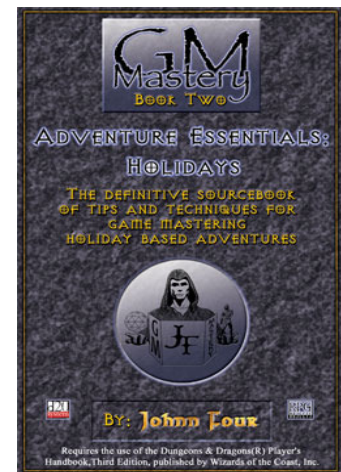
Does DC really have a plan? Could all of the Big Events of the past few years really be part of one grand story that will culminate and, more importantly make sense, by the end of Countdown? I sure hope so, and I will stick around to see it through. Despite all the varied opinions there is one thing we all should remember. We're talking about comic books where nothing is written in stone and what we know today could be changed in next years big event.

John Four

I, like many other gamers, have been subscribing to John Four's Roleplaying Tips Newsletter (www.roleplayingtips.com) for several years. His email newsletter is always interesting, and has tons of useful tidbits of information.

However, for those of you that don't know, John Four does more than put out this little bit of gaming goodness. He actually produces gaming products! Below you can find a pictures of 2 of his GM Mastery books **NPC Essentials and Adventure Essentials: Holidays**.

Check out RPGNow or your FLGS to find out more.



News & Rumors continued from page 7

and his son are creating characters for the new Virgin comics Imprint.

- The Wildstorm Universe is now one of the 52 DC universes. *Cross-overs commence!*
- The Watchmen movie apparently still has a green light and is scheduled for a 2008 release.
- There are a few rumors floating around that the Teen Titans may be making a live action movie appearance in the near future.
- Rob Liefeld and his book Youngblood are returning to Image Comics. There will be a hardcover release of earlier stories that, according to newsarama, are a "re-mastered, re-scripted, and re-imagined version the original Image launch title Youngblood." There will also be an all new Youngblood series released.

Polyancer Magazine

The demise of both Dragon and Dungeon magazine has undoubtedly left a void in much of the gaming community. Fortunately I have been working hard to find suitable replacements and thanks to a friend I believe I have found one.

Polyancer magazine is a system neutral magazine put out by Polyancer Studios and is definitely worth checking out. I just received my copy and I was very impressed. The book may be missing the pretty color pictures but the content is rock solid and more than makes up for it.

Being setting/system neutral means the book is not beholden to any one game and is made to appeal to a broad range of RPG players. There are interviews, adventure ideas and some great articles. Subscriptions run \$45 U.S. but if the issue I just got is any indication it is money well spent.

www.polyancerstudios.com/content/view/47/60/



<http://decoderringtheatre.com>

The Red Panda Adventures is one of my personal favorite podcasts and I highly recommend you check it out.



Fantasy Clip Ink: Spell Casters Set 1

This month's bonus image courtesy William McAusland and the gang over at Outland Arts

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2007 Convention Calendar

July

- ◆ Comic Con 2007
July 26 – 29 San Diego
www.comic-con.org/ccli/
- ◆ Liberty Con 2007
July 27-19 East Ridge, TN
www.libertycon.org
- ◆ Origins 2007
July 5-8 Columbus Oh
www.originsgames.com/
- ◆ Phoenix Con Games
July 14-17 2007 Phoenix, AZ
www.conevents.com/page/phx/main.asp

August

- ◆ Archon
Aug 2-5 2007 Collinsville IL
www.archonstl.org/
- ◆ Wizard World Chicago
Aug 9th – 12th 2007
www.wizarduniverse.com/conventions/chicago.cfm
- ◆ Gen Con Indy
Aug 16-19 2007
www.gencon.com/
- ◆ Conglomeration 2007
Aug 10-12 Louisville Ky
www.conglomeration.org/
- ◆ Dragon Con 2007
Aug 31-sept 3
lanta GA
www.dragoncon.org/
- ◆ Gateway 2007
August 31– Sep 3
www.strategicon.net/

September

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October

???

November

- ◆ Wizard World Texas
Nov. 16th – 18th 2007
www.wizarduniverse.com/conventions/texas.cfm
- ◆ AmberCon 2007
Nov 1-4 Portland OR
www.amberconnw.org/
- ◆ Chi-Tag
Nov 16-18 Chicago, IL
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December

???

** Ok guys and gals, the convention season is well underway and the list just keeps getting smaller. So send me those conventions listings! If you know of a convention in your area that you would like to promote, please email me the web address and I will be happy to add it to the list **

Email:

geekgazette@thegeekgazette.com

Summertime Special

First off I hope you enjoyed our first ever Summer Special Edition of the Gazette as much as I enjoyed putting it together. Since the Gazette changed from a monthly publication to a bimonthly one, I hope to put out a few more specials to fill the space between issues from time to time. Maybe we will make the summer special a tradition and even do a special Christmas Wishlist in a few months.

I used this issue to put in a few things I that regretfully could-

n't fit into last issue and that likely won't fit into the August Gen Con issue such as My Perfect Game. If articles like this are something you enjoy let me know and we may make them regular additions to the Gazette. If you have a perfect or favorite game story feel free to share it, space permitting, I may even put a few reader stories in future issues. I also used this time to share some of the news and rumors that popped up over the last few weeks and generally just to keep in touch.

Hopefully, everyone is enjoying the summer so far, whether you are staying at home or hitting the conventions. I just want to remind everyone that there are tons of great things to do during the summer months and oddly enough some of them having nothing to do with gaming, sci-fi, computers, or comics.

While I know that we geeks get a bad rap for being, um... reclusive, I urge everyone to get outside. Sit on the porch, under a tree or in the park and read that book you've been meaning to get to. Walk, instead of drive, to the store or just take a walk around your neighborhood. Make a few non-geek friends, mundanes can be really nice if you give them the chance and don't feed them after midnight. You may even be able to get a few of them interested in your hobbies.

However you decide to spend the summer I hope you have a fun and safe time doing it.

Until next time,

Michael