

C & S By Ed Simbalist

AND FRP GAMING.

INTRODUCTION - The following pages were sent to us by Ed Simbalist after Phil had written regarding some queries that we had on C&S. He also gave us permission to print his address if any Oracle readers wish to write to him direct. Here it is -

EDWARD E. SIMBALIST,
c/o FANTASY GAMES UNLIMITED INC.,
P.O. BOX 182, ROSLYN, N.Y. 11576

In his letter he stresses the fact that personal letters may have an indefinite wait. What we suggest is that if you have any questions on C&S, forward them to us first, as we already have a few of the answers. If we cannot answer them we will get in touch with Ed and print his reply. If you saw the size of our mail you would realize just how generous is Ed's offer. -Lou.

I'm writing to thank you for your kind review in Underworld Oracle. We tried hard to make Chivalry & Sorcery an "in depth" FRP, and though there are indeed "holes" in the rules, we are attempting to plug them as quickly as possible. I am currently writing articles for White Dwarf in the U.K. and Wargaming and Alarums and Excursions in the USA. Wargaming is Fantasy Games Unlimited's own prozine and is available from Games Workshop in London.

F.G.U. will be publishing two C&S supplements this summer. The C&S Sourcebook in July, and Swords & Sorcerers in August. Both volumes are intended to augment the present C&S rulebook and are not necessary to the basic game in any way; they merely add to it. (C&S is increased by about 25-30% with these two publications.) As is consistent with our policy, all additional materials and systems are fully integrated with the basic game.

It is also the personal conviction of the writers that we should attempt to answer any questions and problems players might be having with their C&S campaign. Any questions could be addressed to us at the address given. Personal letters may receive an answer after an indefinite wait, however, due to the distances involved, the unreliability of the mails, and the amount of correspondence and other writing occupying our time. When possible we will try to communicate through the 'zines.

Jan Vrapcenak and I have designed a comprehensive naval game, Bireme & Galley

which covers the period of naval warfare from 1500 B.C. to 1571 A.D. The game provides ship counter pieces and also a 23" x 35" sheet of 10 ship deck plans in 1" = 6' scale for man-to-man action. Over 10,000 variations on 50 basic ship types are possible, depending upon the quality of ship construction and crew training. Ship-to-ship and deck-fighting rules are complete and simulate warfare under oars and sail in considerable depth. The game is quite self-contained but includes an appendix outlining how to adapt naval dimensions to a C&S campaign.

Wes Ives, a C&S player/Game Master in Raleigh, North Carolina, has developed an excellent system of speeding up man-to-man actions in C&S, and this valuable player's aid will likely be published sometime after August.

Magick is our first love, and we are glad that you approve of how we dealt with it in C&S. Wilf is engaged in expanding upon the rules and explaining the WHY of them. I have added to the number of magick user types in our supplements, with additional Shaman rules and an entire new section of magick based upon Nordic Runecraft. Trevor Clarke, a member of our design team from Buckinghamshire who joined us here last fall, has developed the Forester class of character, which includes several magick-user types as well. For lovers of a Celtic mythos, the Druids, Gwrach, and other magick users have come to light. We are also interested in expanding the C&S monster lists. We have tended to stay within the bounds of traditional monsters, but we are not adverse to well thought-out and interesting beasties so long as they make sense and do not throw play balance off to the point that there is another "arms-race" comparable to the one that attended D&D, with hundreds of new devils of darkness emerging from all sides, each more horrible and powerful than the last, and thus a corresponding escalation of magical devices and wondrous spells to counter them. Monsters should enhance the game, not dominate. Remember, the biggest monster of all is the Game Master himself, and if he has the wit and swiftness of mind he can handle a situation with remarkably meagre resources. Anyone reading or contributing to the Oracle who is interested in monster design could get in touch with me so that we can compare notes and ideas.

The strength of C&S, we believe, is the fact which you noted - namely, that the Game Master is not the only person in the game. The players have input, and the more they contribute to a campaign, the more satisfying it is. C&S is, ultimately, an ongoing campaign that extends far beyond the dungeon.

It can be whatever the players want it to be - dungeon and overland adventure on the individual level: political/military with diplomacy and warfare: High Chivalry, with valiant Knights jousting for honour and doing great deeds: etc. Those players who enjoy man-to-man combat can specialize in the tactics of the melee, for the rules emphasise knowledge of and skill in applying the rules in an adversary situation - not simple dice rolling. Those interested in magick can now specialise in that vast (and COMPLEX) field with a sure knowledge that, while things don't come easy, the results are well worth while both from point of view of the effectiveness of one's research in the field and also the satisfaction one has in solving a difficult problem in logical planning. I think that some players will dislike the complexity of our magical system because they want it to be "easy", but C&S magick at its highest level is comparable to packing an atomic bomb if it is used intelligently, and that kind of power is not to be put into the hands of the shallow thinker. Thus, to learn to use such power properly requires a long apprenticeship. The rules force the player of magick users to serve his own apprenticeship and so enter into the mystique of the Arcane Arts himself.

Further; you are correct in saying that C&S is not a "beginner's" game, but I know from the experiences of others as well as my own that one experienced player can quickly educate beginners to the game. At a school near my home, a member of my design team is Game Master and has effectively trained schoolboys of ages 11 to 14 most effectively in C&S play - so well, in fact, that some of the reports I receive literally curdle my blood. I think that crew could give me a run for my money as a Game Master. Incidentally, the Game Master at that school is a student of 15 who never played D&D and has played C&S for about one year. The real obstacle to playing C&S is the attitudes that some players will bring to it from other FRPs, like D&D. D&D is ostensibly a role-playing game, but the roles are played at a superficial level in most instances. Players tend to remain themselves, and their egos dominate their game play. "Role Playing" in such a situation is a misnomer, for no real role-playing occurs beyond the surface pretence of being a Fighter with such and-such characteristics. In a purely dungeon oriented game, that is perhaps a slight problem. In a world-scope

campaign, it is potentially devastating. **ROLE PLAYING** means entering into the persona or personality of a character as much as possible during game play. One is no longer John Smith sitting at a table playing a game for several hours; he is Sir Alois de Tanqueville, knight-errant, with a complete personality profile that defines the way he thinks and reacts. His quirks of personality, his background and station in society, his past experiences, all play a part in how a player will interpret the character during game play. True role playing is like the writing of a "living novel". One plays in character. In my group, we penalize players who constantly fall out of character and play themselves, while brilliant character play is applauded around the table. In the final analysis, we all have much more fun. And having fun is the final object of any game.

Another obstacle is the emphasis upon the quality of encounters rather than the sheer quantity. Encounters are necessarily fewer in a C&S expedition because of the time element. Combat takes longer because players must decide upon a course of action. A simple movement of two figures up to each other and a fast dice roll never constitutes a combat simulation. It is merely a rapid resolution of what could loosely be termed a combat situation. Since the encounter is the final end of any FRP expedition, we felt it was essential to simulate it in considerable depth and detail. Players identify themselves with their characters, and the longer one has a character the deeper the attachment becomes. He therefore should be afforded the opportunity to be able to defend that character with all of his wits and skill.

The rules must allow for such an application of player skill and knowledge. Thus C&S is perhaps more complex than some might, at first, think is necessary. That complexity also forestalls the snap-decisions and arbitrary imposition of "tough" monsters by the Game Master; for the GM must also think out what he is going to do, not just roll dice. The result is well-prepared and well-conducted expeditions on all sides. Teamwork is essential for a high-quality campaign, and I find that my own group is now so welded to the idea of playing roles to the hilt that I can, as Game Master, hand over the control of a monster to a player and tell him to fight the character of another with the assurances that he will be no less bloodthirsty than I would be. In short, I can second a player as a deputy GM during an expedition and trust him to do his best against a character, even though

he has his own character along on the same expedition! I've never been disappointed. What this means, however, is that a group has to be composed of players who respect and like each other. It is a social group, not just a bunch of individuals gathered together for a "game". In the final analysis, FRP games are rarely a great success if they are approached in the same manner as a game of "pick-up" soccer. If a player's personality does not mesh with the rest of the group, trouble will arise sooner or later. It is the same in any other activity, if one is to be honest about it. Finally, C&S points out the ultimate truth about FRP games: Large numbers of players detract from the quality of play. Communication science has pointed out that the best communication is between 2 to 7 individuals in a group situation. Larger numbers result in many people being left out of the communication process or the action most of the time, and often they become bored and/or unruly. Answers to important questions are delayed or ignored as the overworked Game Master attempts to cope with the situation, tempers become frayed, and mistakes occur. The result is chaos, with everyone shouting and yelling to gain attention, concentration is lost, and the final result may be less than satisfying. Better to have a large club of players split into several groups, with each headed by a Game Master conducting his own expedition. So long as the Game Masters are fully agreed on common club policy, there will be consistency in the way rules are applied and expeditions are run. C&S game systems aim at standardisation of many rules and situations to avoid the need to suddenly and arbitrarily decide on what would happen in a situation. Further standardisation of approaches is required by general agreement amongst the players as to what should be done or not done. Only in this way can meaningful cross-over games between different dungeons and wilderness regions, etc., be played. I shall endeavour to write further in response to any concerns - Oracle readers may have.....

This is the end of the first letter that Ed sent to us, What follows are more extracts, taken this time from his second letter. We would like to thank Ed for his great (and quick) response to our letters. We have printed these because we feel that they make a great deal of sense and that Mr. Simbalist does feel, as he says, passionately committed to FRP Gaming. We know how he feels. Lou & Phil.

Reluctance of players to switch to other FRP games is understandable. We must understand that D&D was (and still is) a phenomenon of unusual dimensions. However, while it was in its time of appearance a totally revolutionary concept in gaming, and therefore clearly BLEW THE MINDS of players who got into it, a great deal of water has passed under the proverbial bridge since then. I don't mean to "knock" the game (that would be "bad form", seeing as I am a competitor designer), but as one reviewer put it, "D&D is to C&S what a 1903 Olds is to a 1978 Mercedes". (That came from "The Deck of Many Things", which is changing its name to "The Major Arcana"). The problem is getting people to put aside old habits of thinking and doing things. D&D is familiar. Players have mastered the systems. True, the revised edition will have a number of changes but, in the final analysis, things are still the old D&D rehashed, reorganized, but not really revitalised with the literally thousands of valuable insights, improvements, and totally new innovations introduced by gamers all over the English speaking world who publish in the many fantasy gaming zines. TSR is, in my opinion, fairly out of touch with the truly creative players out there. Still, D&D is comfortable, familiar, known. Thus it holds its players. Yet I sometimes wonder why. I know that I started meddling with the rules immediately I obtained my copies of the rules. I wasn't satisfied from the beginning. Oh, they were good to start from, but many things didn't square with my knowledge of myth, legend, and fantasy literature. Many elements were positively erroneous. Anything which had a clear counterpart in tradition but which did not accept the traditional model as authoritative brought an indelible stench to my nostrils which I could not forget. That was what led me to start on C&S. Darn it all, anyhow. If one is going to deal with Magick (we always spell it with a "k" to distinguish our concept from the naive and totally false concepts found in many of our competitors; besides, Magick is "period", mediaeval, belonging to a past age, which is only fitting in FRP gaming), then one should at least research the subject in depth and show in one's game systems that the genuine article is being simulated. Only in a melting pot could Magick be transformed into "magic",

with many different and often conflicting traditions of the Arcane being stirred together without regard for the tradition WHICH NECESSARILY SUPPORTS AND GIVES MEANING TO THE IDEA OF MAGICK IN THE FIRST PLACE. The universal "open" game must necessarily lose out on atmosphere and flavour - which you and your group are only now beginning to discover (or re-discover) in a C&S campaign. Magick makes sense only in a pre-scientific context. D&Ders I have observed all too often bring their NARROW 20th century attitudes into a FANTASY WORLD, and use magic as a form of super-scientific technology by another name. At its worst, D&D is an arms race, not a ROLE PLAYING GAME. Role playing is at the heart of this form of gaming. You and your friends have discovered that each person around the table is just that - a person. The ego trip of butchering a score of trolls or dispatching three red, one chrome, and two platinum dragons, etc., is giving way to enjoyment of the give-and-take of the personalities the players are projecting. In time, "traps" will be far more than a poison needle overlooked by the overworked Thief, a labyrinthine maze containing assorted trapdoors and pits, dead ends, and (choke) Wandering Monsters that issue forth in an unending stream from some mysterious and unexplained source called the Random Appearance Table. HERE IS A REAL TRAP. Wes Ives invented it. Or rather, he simply observed that feudal society is a bit more than a Hollywood movie or Prince Valiant comics. A young squire of noble rank was informed that his father had died. He was knighted on the spot by the messenger, one of his father's oldest and most loyal vassals, who then suggested that the young man return immediately to receive the oaths of fealty and homage of his new vassals. But the young man foolishly chose to go ADVENTURING instead! He was captured and held to ransom, but his vassals refused to pay. The taste of such a neat trick is sweet indeed. Wes has taken the time to absorb some of the background so necessary to recreating a feudal setting in depth. Knowing that to fail to obtain the homage and fealty of his vassals, the young man would in fact insult them, Wes proceeded to bait the "trap" beautifully. His NPC's did all they could without giving the game away, to "clue in" the player of that hapless character but he didn't tumble to what was coming down. Feudal society was based upon personal relationship

between lord and vassal, secured by mutual oaths of loyalty and respect. Failure to secure such oaths placed the young lord in jeopardy, for he had not bound his vassals to him and thus could not command their aid (the term is truly significant in a ransom situation). The trap would not be conceived by a Game Master (or Dungeon Master, if you prefer, although DM is a highly restrictive term and clearly points the singular direction of D&D gaming) who has no knowledge of any environment or culture beyond his own. The fact is, as Wes has repeatedly pointed out to me, that most gamers and an incredible number of DMs have NO SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE of science, psychology, sociology, anthropology, geography, etc., and certainly not of MYTH and LEGEND. Their knowledge even of the mainstream of fantasy fiction is relatively limited and a good number probably have little knowledge beyond that gleaned from Marvel Comics (Conan, Kull, etc.), which is re-warmed Robert E. Howard.

The foregoing is not a put-down of players and DMs. Rather, it points out the reasons why D&D went in so many aberrant directions over the years. I am a teacher of English (school master to you, I suppose,) and as an educator I have had the opportunity to observe close to 3000 pupils since I started my career. Many are profoundly ignorant of the traditions and history that made their society what it is. These same people, or people like them, are playing D&D, EPT, C&S, etc., and they are doing so with a relative lack of feeling for the materials and background that underlies such games.

Is there any wonder that some find the mind-bending task of coping with an alien culture (for feudal societies are quite alien to the social environment we know) too much to take? The OPEN game of D&D permits them to kill and loot and backstab without having to deal with the truly difficult problem of other people and law and government and the bigger - noble who lives on the neighbouring fief. D&D's "Openness" is really a vacuum. No society is in any way simulated - not a feudal society or even the barbarian society of Howard's Hyborean Age. That is the MYTH of D&D, its appearance to recreate the worlds of fantasy fiction when in fact it creates only The Dungeon. Those players having the knowledge, training, and maturity to know the difference will not be beguiled by the myth. The unknowledgeable and the juvenile will think that they have it all! As a student and teacher of literature, let me tell you that D&D cannot recreate the Hyborean Age or any other world of traditional /

or fantasy fiction. Indian and Greek and Nordic Gods don't mix. Demons drawn from a dozen traditions or simply made up (often badly, I'm afraid), monsters distorted all out of proportion from their originals so that they are no longer recognizable, magical traditions that are not traditions at all but merely game constructs hammered off on a typewriter without awareness or concern that Necromancers are a class of mage at all but rather are portrayed as a rank of magician, the provision of spells acquired without any insight or work, etc., etc., -- all these breed sloppy thinking and plain misunderstanding in players who have not the background or knowledge in the REAL traditions of myth, legend, fantasy or Magick. I even saw an article which proposed at one point that the DM CHANGE THE LAWS OF THE UNIVERSE to give players a "surprise". Imagine the sheer naivete of this player-contributor to Alarums & Excursions! He would blithely change the Laws of nature when he likely has no deep grasp of the existing laws to begin with. His reason: "surprise" the others. Shallow, shallow, shallow!

As Scott Bizar, my publisher, has said, it is time that we put aside childish things and leave the juvenilia to the juveniles. Surely those of us who have a deeper grasp of the whole realm of fantasy fiction and fantasy gaming must demand more than another new monster (complete with Monstermark or the Dragon Seal of Approval) or a new magical device which is guaranteed to blast, burn, slash and shatter, and crumble and crush 7 levels of dungeon at a crack. I'm not "kidding". I'm angry, and I'm deadly serious. This sort of "easy" approach to a great past-time has ruined too many promising campaigns.

Your C&S group has discovered what it means to meet up with the REAL Orcs conceived by the Master Tolkein. People DIE at the hands of Orcs! C&S combat systems, while complex and somewhat confusing UNTIL PLAYERS HAVE FOUGHT ENOUGH MAN-TO-MAN ACTIONS TO BE FAMILIAR WITH IT, offer players a chance to make fairly realistic combat decisions and actions. An unskilled player is an unskilled player. If he hasn't had the time or the patience or the skill to master combat, he will lose. No random die roll will save him now.

The C&S philosophy of player skill and competence, realistic simulation, and truth to the great traditions of legend, history, and fantasy, contrasts sharply with D&D philosophy. In # 7 of White Dwarf, Gary Gyax writes in a letter

responding to Roger Musson "with considerable dismay". He rejects the use of statements regarding "realism" when applied to a "game". He says that no game has any "true realism in it" and recommends that "folks seeking realism should go and participate in whatever the game is based on". He observes that "D&D is a HEROIC fantasy game" and asks "Who can slit Conan's throat with a blow?". The point of D&D, according to the game's Oracle and Champion, is to allow "participants to create a heroic character who is not subject to some fluke. Getting killed requires a lot of (mis-)play in most cases."

In response, Mr. Gyax is speaking through his hat. Dissembling is dissembling, and speaking around the issue is beating around the bush. I have seen similar "it's just a game" lines from Messrs. Pulsipher and Turnbull (regular White Dwarf contributors who have somehow set themselves up as a committee of "authorities" on FRP gaming). Again, sheer poppycock! When is a game not a game?.

WHEN IT HAS BECOME A CULT ITEM, THAT'S WHEN. FRPers live their game; they don't just play!

D&D is beyond the "it's a game" level. It has been beyond that stage for some time. Too many players are looking for more than a game; they want an imaginative simulation with realistic game systems.

That rejection of realism by Mr. Gyax points out the gulf that has opened between "first generation" fantasy role gamers and "second" and "third generation" FRPers and games. How can Mr. Gyax NOT speak of realistic simulation when he introduces the concept of combat? The activity has too many real-life models, which his game systems attempt to portray in some manner or other. Mr. Musson is right; Mr. Gyax is wrong!

We of the "third" generation have struck out in new directions, kicking open the dungeon doors and looking out into the wider world for our action. Campaigns are as interesting and competent as the GMs who design them, but they have plenty of assistance with game systems that SIMULATE many real-life situations and activities that may arise at one time or another. Our Sourcebook and Swords & Sorcerers are adding more than 150 pages to C&S, however much we didn't want to publish supplements at all, making C&S the bigger biggest rule book ever published. D&D creates DUNGEONS; C&S

and Traveller and other games of their ilk are in the business of creating entire WORLDS. And THAT is the difference! FANTASY is a subject misunderstood by many. It is not just a synonym for "uncontrolled imaginings". That is the populist definition, but it bears no resemblance to the totally controlled creativity that marks the work of fiction. Fantasy fiction is based upon REALITY. The world IS, and the world follows LAWS of NATURE consistent with the author's conception of that WORLD. In most cases, the natural order of things we know so well is followed by a writer, with perhaps a few biological twists to make things interesting, but rarely if every will water flow uphill or trees grow underground. Beasts must eat or die of starvation, men bleed, and all living things must sooner or later die of NATURAL causes. Incidentally, old age, a sword in the vitals, or being blasted by a fireball are all NATURAL causes in a fantasy world; for Fireballs are merely magical, and Magick is assumed to work in fantasy worlds. Magick is merely an adjunct of scientific law, the LAWS of Magick being no less knowable or applicable or effective than the Laws of Science. Only the uninitiated believe Magick to be a matter of "hocus-pocus" and wave-the-magic-wand and anything happens.

The moment one emerges from the narrow confines of the dungeon and sees the vistas of the vast World that ever lies beyond the next horizon, one must become aware of the fact that far more than listening at a door or checking for traps or detecting "magic" is needed to get ahead in the world. Stupid role play - and ROLE PLAY is essential if a group of players is going to create a world complete with "living" characters (their own personae) and "real-life situations" (the infinite range of possible situations and encounters and confrontations possible in a world-stage) again, stupid role play will end with a character's downfall. Stupidity includes ignorance of the rules by which the world operates - not only the rules of the game as printed in the rulebook, but rules of proper conduct in a SOCIAL context.

Reality doesn't belong in a game? Then why bother to print price lists or provide for the building of castles or have battle rules? D&D does this, then fails to give any direction on what to DO with them once one has them.

Mr. Gyax, in the abovementioned letter, says that "most players find that the game of seeking and gaining, with the ensuing

increase in character ability is the thing. Combat at best is something to be done quickly so as to get on with the fun....." D & D offers experience points and gold. C&S offers the WORLD. Be a LORD. RULE your own kingdom or barony. ASPIRE to greater POWER and POSITION. If you are a commoner, seek the golden spurs of Knighthood. Gain REPUTATION and RESPECT in the eyes of others. AVENGE wrongdoing. Do GOOD. Do EVIL. Try to escape the consequences of your evil acts by CUNNING and DECEIT. ENGINEER the downfall of your enemies. SMITE the GODLESS. Take HOLY ORDERS. Go CRUSADING. Make a PACT with the DEVIL. The entire, infinitely various and always interesting WORLD awaits each player, and he may make his own choices, carry out his experiments with his characters' life-choices to see what will happen, and by his own WIT and SKILL as a player he succeeds or fails in the ambitions and goals he has set for each of his characters. I have waxed perhaps too vehemently on the subject, but such is the depth of my passion for ROLE PLAYING as opposed to mere GAME PLAYING. There is a world of difference separating the two activities, and I feel sorry for those who will not make the attempt to find out what role playing is really about and prefer the damp, dark, tubercular depths of the dingy dungeon.....

Ed - writes that he will endeavour to write further on any queries that Oracle readers might have. Please note that these pages are EXTRACTS of two letters that Ed sent to us. We did not have space to print all 12 pages of what he sent to us. However we will be featuring more of his work in the next mag.

THE CHIVALRY AND SORCERY CHARACTER SHEET.

We were supposed to provide an insert in C&S containing a sample profile character sheet, but for a variety of reasons it was not included. Both we, the writers, and the publisher apologize for this omission. The profile sheet presented on Fgs. 15 & 18 contains all of the basic information needed to run a C&S character. Further notes could be placed on the back of the sheet.

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