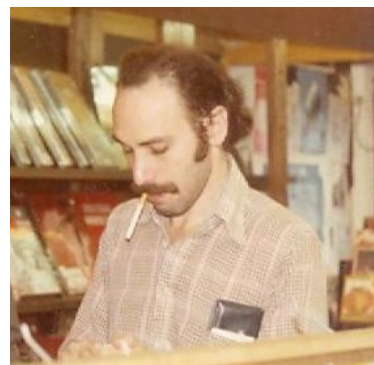


# SCOTT BIZAR

Scott is one of the more controversial personages in our hobby. If you knew him well enough, you would know that he is actually a very nice guy and would be an excellent friend.

## **My Life in Role Playing (If you are really interested)**

Well, I'm still somewhat taken aback that ye olde editor is after my background when I've never been primarily known for my brilliant contributions to RPG. I'm just an editor, and sometimes game designer, who has learned enough to know that he cannot do everything well, and the major thing that I cannot do well is design RPGs. Nonetheless, I guess I have some degree of involvement in the phenomenon so I'll take this opportunity to straighten out any misconceptions over what I have and have not done.



My first exposure to role play, as with most others, was when I bought D&D (along with TSR's Barsoom rules) when they were first released. I immediately ran home (drove, but who really cares about that kind detail) and attempted to play. I had invested \$100 in figures for the Barsoom rules and after painting the first ten or so quickly, experimented with the rules and found them to be infantile and not overly playable by a serious miniatures gamer.

That still left D&D. At first we could not make any headway with those rules as they never explained how to play.

When we did figure it all out, we found that it was not worth the effort. With wizards not carrying swords (where did that misconception come from?) and buying spells with gold (gold=experience points) in some kind of supermarket of magic, and the simplistic combat system, we could not balance the game with our own knowledge of fantasy and the fantasy tradition. I still think that the biggest factor against the game was that it missed the entire point of most fantasy, that the wizard does not go off adventuring except in the case of world shattering events, as in the case of Gandalf. Wizards have better things to do than risk their overstuffed brains and heads in dangerous tasks. The entire tradition of heroic fantasy has the wizard hiring Conan or Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser to do the adventuring for them. Well, needless to say, this was not the game for us.

On that level, and that level only, I guess it can be said that we owe our start to TSR. We Simply did not like their games and felt we could do a better job. Whether or not we have is purely a matter of opinion, but we have done so for our gaming needs and tastes.

To demonstrate how far we were from role play back then is simple. Our first idea was that we could do a proper set of miniatures rules for fantasy. We were miniatures gamers and fantasy buffs. I'd always wanted to do a set of Conan rules, and having Lin Carter for a roommate at the time did not make it overly difficult to obtain expert advice, so that is what we did. In fact, Royal Armies of the Hyborean Age was our first fantasy title, still one of our most popular, and it has nothing whatsoever to do with RPGs.

Despite projects like Bunnies & Burrows, which was independently designed by the truly professional Dennis Sustare with Scott Robinson, we were still primarily miniatures oriented until August of 1976, when we met Ed Simbalist and Wilf Backhaus and first heard of their project, which became Chivalry & Sorcery. C&S may have been influenced by me, and I know they appreciated my screaming for realism and a "truer" magick system, but I had nothing to do with the actual design. The same is true of Starships & Spacemen and our latest entry into this field, Villains & Vigilantes. Thus, while I may stand around and yell alot about how a game needs to be complete in one package and should cover all areas so often left out of RPGs, this is only an editorial

function. To further demonstrate my own lack of ability in RPG design, the reader has only to remember that I did design Flash Gordon and the Warriors of Mongo. That was a project where we had no design freedom and were required, by contract, to force players to follow the adventures of Flash Gordon with little or no deviation. Yet, despite these limitations, I am convinced that most of the designers who have written in this column could have done a better job than I did. That was my last RPG design and I have no plans to do others. I now simply pass my ideas for games along to our various design teams and allow them all the design freedom they could want. A perfect example is our forthcoming (it should be out by the time this sees print) Gangster! It was a project that I could not do alone so planned to do with Ed Simbalist. When we had the offer of design work from some of our usual group, one of whom was a NY City police sergeant, we passed the project on to them. In that it was their first design I have been involved in the rewriting and clarification of most of the rules, but I have not designed any of the game systems.

Thus, my own contributions to RPG are minimal as a designer. I'd like to think that they are worthy of note in an editorial capacity since we stand for a certain amount of quality and completeness that has been lacking before we became involved in this area. But, please don't confuse who should get the credit if you like one of the RPGs we've published, this credit belongs to the designers, not to me as the editor.

I do play role assumption games regularly, so they do play a part in my life. The first such game that really caught my fancy was GOW's En Garde, a really fine RPG that can be expanded beautifully. I'm easy to con into running Starships & Spacemen and I expect to run a great deal of Gangster! Yet, I am not the usual image of a Gamemaster as I am not really masochistic or sadistic enough to go to all the work required to be our group's C&S GM. That, I will always leave to Ed Simbalist or Wilf Backhaus when they are in New York, or to our own Rusty Young who runs our local campaign.

The only other thing that I will claim credit for is being the first game publisher to state in print that no rules are perfect. Every group should modify all rules (even ours) and adapt ideas from anywhere and everywhere to improve the rules to fit that group's own tastes and needs. We print rules that fit our needs and will not object to any changes made to fit the needs of others. With all the good stuff around these days, it seems impossible that someone would run anyone set of rules without using some systems from some other set of rules. That is why we are all into RPG or FRP. These are the key terms, not the name of anyone game.

You'll see a great deal more in the way of RPGs from us, some of which are from ideas generated by myself or within our own group, but others are from freelancers who simply contact us in hopes that we'll be intrigued by their ideas (and we often are!). The main thing is that the designers of the games deserve the credit and not screaming and ranting types, like myself, who often make the designers' lives miserable by our incessant demands for yet more detail or background.