Old School Interviews

Volume 1



By Shane Ward

Originally appearing at 3toadstools.blogspot.ca

3 Toadstools Publishing

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Forward

Stating this is a "forward" is probably not the best use of the word. However that is what popped into my head. In reality it is an introduction. At some point in the year two thousand and fifteen I had a grand idea of surprising people with the following email. Subject line "It's your turn!" the rest of the subject matter in the email were the questions. It's wonderfully enjoyable to surprise people, I had quite a lot of hilarious surprise messages back. The essence of these interviews was to use a catchphrase "float my boat". I am very interested in what these people had to say, and to put them on the spot like that was seriously the best thing. These are people of the "OSR", old school publishers, role players, graphic artists, cartographers. It's been my pleasure to read their responses, invest time in researching what makes them tick. I look forward to sending out more emails with the subject line "it's your turn!"

Thank you very much: Thaumiel, Tim, Dyson, Venger, Frank, Joshua, James & Joe! Without you guys this wouldn't have happened.

Please enjoy.

Shane

Interview with Thaumiel Nerub of D-oom Products

Originally Published Wednesday, September 9, 2015

1. When did you get your start role playing? What was your first system that you used?

Primary school, when I was around 11 or 12. My friend's big brother played roleplaying games and introduced his brother into hobby. From that kid I got it.

My first system I used was a Finnish RPG called ANKH. It most definitely has roots in earlier D&D, but still being different. That was also the first game I ever bought, from a department store back in the days. I still own it, but from the boxed set there are only three booklets left, two without covers.

2. Tell me about Crypt Of Rabies Blog

Crypt of Rabies is my newer blog that replaced Cradle of Rabies. Cradle was a roleplaying games blog but I started it before getting really into OSR, so it was a kitchen sink. Celebrating OSR I thought that the cradle should grow. That's was the beginning of the crypt.

I write about OSR products. There's plenty of interviews, some material, article like writings and this and that.

3. You publish old school adventures under "D-oom Products", how did the name come about out?

D-oom Products was supposed to be something else than a publishing name for roleplaying games material. I thought I'd buy a stock of out-of-business rock/goth/punk clothing store and re-sell that stuff online. It didn't happen. Then I started working on gaming material and I already had a business name set.

D-oom name... my real name is Daniel, that's D for doom. Doom is also a cool word. I have no idea how English speaking people pronounce it, though.

4. What was the first thing you published?

Dragon Union, which is English translation from Finnish. Lohikäärmeliitto is a supplement for old school rules showing how you can run games in a way the original author Nestori Lehtonen thinks. I basically produced it in English also translating half of the text. But I was not alone, I had a great set of people helping me out!

I learned so much with this project, mostly what I shouldn't do and how things shouldn't be done!

5. So you're doing a Patreon, how is that going?

I am having fun with it! Sadly some real life stress is dragging me and sucking my creative juices out, but I am there. I naturally wish there were more patrons to support me, but I am perfectly happy with those who have stepped into my cart. They are great!

It's great to see the response from people (within Google Plus, too) when people like what I am doing! Greatest reward ever when people like what I create. I can also monitor what kind of ideas are not that popular.

With Patreon there are so many awesome creators, and more start continually, it sometimes feels hard to be as damn awesome as everyone else! But hey, I enjoy doing this, so I am doing something right then. People can download, with one month's delay, what I create from Crypt of Doom blog.

6. What is your favorite clone?

From clones Labyrinth Lord to play Basic/Expert D&D because it's one book volume and quite faithful for the source. For D&D fantasy Swords & Wizardry because it's

damn simple and elegant system, easy to learn and teach, easy to hack and modify. It is quite close to OD&D (so they say) but not a straightforward clone, so I am not sure if it qualifies. OSRIC, I probably won't play as is, but is a damn neat pocked size but thick book of material. There's so much in it!

I think that is the trinity of OSR clones. Similacrum games is another story ;)

7. What system are you currently playing?

Currently I am going to run S&W Whitebox next for a new group. We'll see what they want to play, and I'll find a system/setting/material for them. But it's going to be OSR rules in my part of the table.

8. You do a lot of your own artwork, have you always drawn?

Yes, I have. For my own enjoyment. The last 10 years or so I haven't drawn much. Every now and then something, but not actually focused in it. I had to start to draw to make artwork, because I couldn't afford to pay for it! I thought, what the heck, I'll do it myself! There are so many awesome OSR artists I follow at Google Plus to give inspiration. I have learned, that drawing is your own personal style and expression, not necessarily school-book-Elmore-pictures. So, I'll do some artwork as long as someone screams me to stop! Well, I think I'd continue still.

9. What is your favorite published module other than yours?

This is easy. My favorite is Tim Short's Where Is Margesh Blackblood? Because it's an awesome one nighter but also a great introduction scenario. There's some decent fights, a tougher fight, some roleplaying etc. I really like it and I've used it more than once.

From your stock I like The Lizardmen of Illzathatch. Great dungeon, lots of content and exploring. The Overrun Mines fit my campaign really well, and it was fun to run. The second part of the dungeon was pure roleplaying! The Tomb Of Gardag The Strange, though, is your best one. I remember the thrill, "this, my man, is awesome" when I read the draft. Oh, Ugard I haven't read yet!

10. What are the plans for the future of D-oom Products?

To publish! When I got enough Patreon material, I make a collection of it releasing it in PDF and POD. I am working on a hexcrawl module with Jonas Mustonen, but that's been on a small hiatus from my part. But I think it is going to be awesome! I've also got a adventure-mini-setting in the back of my head, but I'll let it cook for a while. I am also open for freelancing and I loved to work with Mythoard! So awesome. Jarrod is a great guy! I also did something for White Star zine, worked with Finnish OSR zine, some of my maps were featured in a Finnish beginner Dungeon Master's guide... all that kind of stuff I am very open to do!

I've also have plans to publish basement print quality products from other published here, locally. I've got two deals already (with your Lizardmen and with Tim Shorts) to print them here to distribute with lower post costs than your if you sent stuff here for individual customers. I am waiting for the time to be right to put these out. At the moment OSR must grow a little bit more locally before I make you guys' products viral!

11. I heard you ran a Con, that's friggin bad assed, How'd it go?

In the end, I was very satisfied with it even though I almost felt disappointed when it started. There were not many people, but I announced it too late (well, the idea was extempore) and there was another con at the same time. There's been interest for next year's Otamocon already, so I'll make it again!

Gaming was good, people was great, BBQ was tasty, sauna was hot, discussions were

juicy. I am going to post a full report of the con in my blog, some day. It's delayed so much for personal reasons, but it'll be available both in English and Finnish!

12. If you had a chance to play a character instead of DM, what kind of character would you play?

I have been a Dungeon Mastering so much, that I am a bad player. I "try" too much. But nowadays I try to play a simple character, not too complicated, not one that wants to shine. I'd explore the dungeon, adventure and the world instead of trying to be a force major and to bend the game around my character. It's hard to be a good player!

13. Is the OSR big in Finland? What about regular D&D? 5e? What other games do you guys play that we might not know about?

OSR is most definitely growing. Me and few other guys found Google Plus community called Siniset Luolat & Valkeat Lohikäärmeet (Blue Caves & White Dragons) to bring OSR gamers together. Now we've published first issue of an OSR zine! There are OSR gamers, but it's not a scene, yet. I think that OSR will be big in Finland, if we work for it.

I don't know what games others play, and how much D&D is played. There are D&D gamers (Pathfinder is still very popular), but other roleplaying games seem to be more popular. There are a good amount of Finnish games published, and some are very popular. One of the most popular games in Finland is Praedor (game by Ville Vuorela based on Petri Hiltunen's comic book series). Ville Vuorela also published a game based on a novel by Strugatski brothers.

And of course James Raggi IV lives in Finland. Lamentations of the Flame Princess is my personal national pride in roleplaying games industry!

Interview with Tim Shorts from Gothridge Manor

Originally published - Wednesday, September 16, 2015

1. How did you get your start roleplaying? What system did you use?

In the winter of '79 we were off of school for a couple of days, my neighbor/good friend, Dwayne, called me to come on over to play a game. I ran through the three feet of snow to see what he had. He had B2 Keep on the Borderlands. He told me it was a game where you kill monsters and collect treasure. "Great, where's the board?" I asked. This game sounded cool. "There is no board." So he and I hashed out as much as we could of the game. And since we had no dice or any real rules to go by we made up our own system on the spot. Since the Yahtzee and Monopoly only had 6-sided dice to steal. Armed with 6-siders we developed a simple rule system. A 1 is a kill. A 6 is a wound. Two wounds and you are dead. We played for hours. Tweaking it along the way, allowing 'followers' as we called them then, to take on some of the monsters and allow us to get farther into the caves. We had a blast.

2. Tell me about the Gothridge Manor Blog.

Gothridge Manor is strictly about fun. What I find fun in gaming and what's going on with me and other folks. You won't find any edition war talk, no political bullshit or social warrior causes. My blog is my hammock in the backyard, the place I go to to relax, sip some ice tea and talk about something I really enjoy.

3. You publish an awesome zine called the "Manor". It's available in print and electronically. What kind of stuff can a new reader look forward to?

The Manor is a mish-mash of whatever is going on in my head and what some of my on-line friends send me. The majority of what I write is system neutral. You'll find your standard fare of random tables, adventures, new monsters and magic items. In my first issue, in the introduction I set the tone of the zine. I had six points, but the last point I made I think is the most relevant. "I do this for fun, not to change minds or challenge gaming philosophies. I roll dice, laugh and try to make my funny voices sound convincing."

4. What was the first adventure you published?

I published Knowledge Illuminates in February of 2011 I believe. In PDF format on RPGNow. It was an adventure I created years before as a start-up for a GURPS campaign. I had my good friend Rob Conley redo the maps for me, to give it a more professional feel. And switching the stats from GURPS to Swords & Wizardry was easy. A few years later I had asked Dylan Hartwell do the art for a print version of Knowledge Illuminates.

5. You are doing a patreon with micro adventures, how is that going?

Micro-adventures is going exceptionally well. I love coming up with these small settings or situations that can be throw into a game. I've gotten a lot of great feedback from folks who've used them. What I also like about doing the micro-adventures is it forces me to keep going. To push beyond my comfort zone and try different things. Recently I did a sci-fi one and I have a three part adventure that deals with the fey realm. I probably wouldn't have ever written them if it hadn't been for Patreon.

6. What is your favourite OSR clone?

Swords & Wizardry Complete is my favorite. But you can't go wrong with any of them. Castles &Crusades is what brought me back to d20 and since then I think I have tried them all. But if I was going to run a game today S&W Complete would me the one I use.

7. What are you currently playing?

I've been playing a lot of different systems lately. I just finished an Exoterrorist game and now we are two weeks into a Pit & Perils adventure. This past weekend I ran a DragonAge game and the same group is going to give the generic version of the AGE system a try, Fantasy Age. And once in a blue moon when I play with the b-team we were playing S&W Complete, but tried Far and Away Land last time we got together. So a lot.

8. Starter adventures is awesome. Where did you get the idea?

Starter Adventures was an idea that came to me after a night of gaming with my wife, she got her own blog The Happy Whisk. Many of the 1st level adventures were toward beginning characters, not beginning players. I thought having one-on-one adventures, that would help someone learn which dice are which and how the basic mechanics work in simple, short situations would be a great way to learn. And being its one-on-one there is no pressure, so the player and GM can take their time to explain things or ask questions.

9. You seem to be a big fan of Mythboard, I haven't quite wrapped my head around it yet, what is it?

Mythoard is a subscription based service that seems permeate our culture these days. There are so many out there these days. But Mythoard targets RPGs. So each month Mythoard ships a box of random RPG products to your mailbox. I love getting fun stuff in the mail. I even had the privilege of being Mythoard's first exclusive, The Stone Fields of Azoroth. What I like about Mythoard is getting the products I'd never heard of before. I get to sample products I probably wouldn't have known about otherwise. And that's what makes it so cool.

10. What is your favourite published module other than yours?

Oh boy. This is tough because I like so many adventures for so many reasons. Zzarchov and Simon Forester put out great adventures. One of my favorite Pathfinder adventure path is Kingmaker. I honestly can't say I have a favorite. But the adventure I most prefer are the smaller ones, like your Abandon Mines. Short, but fun adventures that can have prolonged effects on the larger campaign.

11. If you could campaign in any world which would it be?

I've been reading a ton of Dragon Age lately. I enjoy the video games and really like what I've read so as of now, probably a Dragon Age would be my choice.

12. What are the plans for the future of GM Games?

Completing one or two Manor before the end of the year. I need to finish a couple of bigger projects, doing a Manor compilation of the first five issues and some longer adventures. Plus, I'm hoping to recruit a few other writers for some other projects.

13. When you get a chance to play a character, what type of PC's do you like to play?

I prefer to play PCs that are alive, but with my penchant for rolling 1s that is rarely the case. I like to play good guys who in the end do the right thing, but has no problem busting knee caps along the way. And I do like to play a...not so nice guy, but I guess I play them too well so the group has banned me from playing the not so nice guys.

Ladies & Gentleman Mr. Dyson Logos

Originally Published Thursday, September 24, 2015

1. How did you get your start roleplaying? What system did you use?

My cousin's friends played D&D in the basement of their home back in the late 70's. It was old school down there, with a sand table from the old war gaming days and everything.

At 9 years old in 1979, my cousin and I both roll up D&D characters and sit down to play for the first time. The group has a map to an old tomb and are excited to be the first ones to loot it. But some goblins also have managed to acquire a copy in the previous session and we are racing them to the site.

When we arrive it is obvious that they have beat us there. So we rush into the tomb and in the second antechamber we run into a small squad of goblins setting up camp and stowing supplies while their leaders are up ahead figuring out the traps and tricks of the place.

We don't surprise them, but we do win initiative the first round. My cousin and I rush into the fight (playing twin elven brothers). My cousin misses his attack, but I get a solid blow in, killing a goblin. However, as I was trying to disentangle my sword from the scrawny marauder, another goblin rushed up and hit me for 2 damage.

That was the end of my character. First character, first session, first round of combat.

I was hooked for life.

The game itself was mostly classic OD&D with a binder of house rules. This was before the 1e DMG had come out, so they weren't using the options from the 1e PHB yet, although a few of the players had the PHB already. I played with that group for two years - I didn't run my own first game until 1981 after buying the Moldvay / Cook B/X rules sets.

2. Tell me about the Dyson Logos Blog? How did it start?

It started something like six years ago when I decided to go through my collection of RPGs and make at least one character for each game (aiming to make one starting and one experienced character for each game - or roughly 500 characters). At the time it was called "A Character For Every Game" and the URL of the site still reflects this (rpgcharacters.wordpress.com).

Somewhere along the way it became a general RPG blog, and from there it became an old school DIY blog with a focus on fantasy RPG maps. It evolves and changes as time goes by. It's basically a non-social version of my google+ stream with two new maps a week these days.

The name changed in 2011 or 2012, I'm not sure exactly when. I was still putting out Dyson's Dodecahedron (my 12-page mini zine) at the time and decided to change the name of the blog to match since I had stopped posting characters to the blog.

3. When did you start drawing maps? And how long did it take you to get your trademark style?

I started drawing maps sometime early in 81 just before getting the 1981 Moldvay / Cook B/X sets. I remember that spring in grade school drawing a multi-level mega dungeon with twisting slides down from pit traps between the levels, and that summer drawing a castle map based on the map elements from Keep on the Borderlands but that was six pages of graph paper in size and I insisted on mapping each level... so about 36 pages in total.

My trademark style is a lot more recent. I experimented with crosshatching earlier, but I

didn't really figure it out until late 2008 when I saw someone else's hatching and map designs and decided to try my hand at it again.

His maps using a “square cross-hatch pattern” (three horizontal lines, three vertical, three horizontal, and so on). They totally threw me into a time warp, flashing back to the maps from old Chaosium products and other magazines from the 70’s and 80’s before we started using digital and coloured maps. It’s not the same retro look as the classic blue maps from the old TSR adventures, but I was never a fan of those maps to begin with. These remind me at some level of the maps from Elric! And Stormbringer and other fantasy games - but it is specifically the whole Elric vibe that tickles the cockles of my heart because that’s the kind of fantasy games I love to run instead of classic high fantasy.

4. What was the first adventure you published?

Embarrassingly I hadn't read Lord of the Rings or the Hobbit since 1980, so I THOUGHT I had come up with the Oakenshield name on my own as something that sounded good and dwarven.

I drew up a map and wrote up a nice little adventure for the 2009 One Page Dungeon Contest and got an honourable mention as the "Best Introductory One Shot".

You can download it here: https://rpgcharacters.wordpress.com/2009/05/26/adventure-the-tomb-of-daruhn-oakenshield/

Later, in August of that year, I released the first adventure PDF that wasn't for a contest - Goblin Gully. This adventure remains one of my all-time favourites and I consider it an important piece of reading for anyone getting into one of my campaigns who hasn't actually played through it. Mainly because it is a level 1 adventure with a 10HD Black Pudding as the "boss monster".

https://rpgcharacters.wordpress.com/2009/08/21/friday-map-goblin-gully-a-deadly-one-page-dungeon/

5. How’s the Patreon going? If I remember correctly you were on their main page for awhile.

The Patreon Campaign has been pretty steady, if in a little bit of a decline lately.

The reality is that the Patreon Campaign changed EVERYTHING for me. It paid my rent through all of 2014, and has covered all my bills through 2015 so far. My patrons are the most generous and awesome people ever - they are giving me the opportunity to keep working on my maps and skills while being able to survive in a hostile capitalist environment.

Without the support of my patrons, my skills would not have grown the way they have in the last two years. I owe them all a huge debt of gratitude and love because they are the people who make the current iteration of the Dodecahedron blog possible. Without them I'd be slaving away at a desk somewhere NOT drawing maps, and that would be a sad thing indeed.

I'm a Patreon success story - in 2014 I was one of the 100 top earners on Patreon and one of my maps is hanging on the wall of the new Patreon HQ. For a long time the Patreon front page was static, and the day they started changing up the mix of stuff on the front page I was up there, but not for long.

The campaign itself has sat at around the same level of support for about six months now - and has been slowly declining month-by-month for the past few months and is currently at the lowest level it's been in the last six months. Which is to say it is still incredibly healthy and pays my bills.

6. What is your favourite OSR clone?

I'm a purist. What most people call retro-clones I call retro-games because they don't clone. In fact, the only two games that I really feel count as retro-clones are OSRIC and Labyrinth Lord. Every other game includes too many house rules or changes from the core game (S&W's single save, for instance). True, there are some oddities even with Labyrinth Lord (clerics casting spells at level 1), but it's as close as we've come to a clone of B/X D&D so far - which is still my game of choice.

Now if we are talking my favourite retro-game, then I am a little more torn. I really love Dungeon Crawl Classics but I think of it as a modern game with a few old-schoolisms in the mix. Labyrinth Lord combined with the Advanced Edition Companion brings us close to how I use to run AD&D1e back in the 80's (because I really didn't like a lot of the more complex rules from AD&D like segments, 1 minute combat rounds, weapon vs armour type tables, etc), which makes me happy.

So yeah, it keeps coming back to Labyrinth Lord. Although Lamentations of the Flame Princess has the most kick-ass selection of additional weird materials out for it.

7. What are you currently playing?

I'm running a D&D5e campaign that is currently going through the classic "Dwellers of the Forbidden City" module (the conversion has been dirt-simple, I just replace the monster stats from the module with the same or similar monsters from the 5e Monster Manual). I would name the next module in line for this campaign, but I figure at least one or two of my gamers will read this article.

I'm a player and DM in a rotating DM game of Dungeon Crawl Classics. We take turns as DM running an official DCC module and then when the adventure is over we swap out the job to the next DM who has to figure out a storyline that removes his or her characters from the group and brings back the characters of the last DM. We've got characters in that game spread between levels 1 and 3 now.

I've got a game of Labyrinth Lord going to playtest the Dyson MegaDelve. We'll see how that goes.

I'm a player in a classic 1975 Empire of the Petal Throne campaign being run by James Maliszewski which has been going for 20 sessions so far and has been a lot of fun - my first experience with the Tekumel setting.

And finally I'm playing in a Star Wars: Edge of Empire campaign that's only had a few sessions but has been a lot of fun to play and to learn the system.

I also had the opportunity recently to play in one of Zak Smith's Marvel Superhero games which was a lot of fun.

8. I'm a big fan of the two "RPG a Day's"/ 48 hour that you did, tell me about the contest and the process?

Ah, the 24 hour RPG Contest.

I first discovered the 24 hour RPG Contest through a game called AssassinX - 24 pages of murder and mayhem where you play assassins and hit men. The writing was jarringly rough, the layout aggressive, and half the game was tables for rolling what kind of mission the PCs get given.

1km1kt.net runs an annual 24 hour RPG Contest now (since the original seems to have died off) and more recently RPGGeek also runs one. The goal is to design, write, and produce a full RPG in 24 hours - throw in 6 hours for sleep and it is a pretty tight deadline. It was originally based on the 24 hour comics which had the goal of producing a 24 page comic in 24 hours, but most of the RPG contests drop the 24 page target.

In 2009 I wrote Geodesic Gnomes. That year the contest at 1km1kt had a limited selection of game concepts / titles to work from, and that particular title triggered memories of the high tech low life living in the dome superstructures over the city in Johnny Mnemonic. I used a very simple system (2d8, roll under your stat + skill), and then wrapped it in some of my best writing from years of playing and running Cyberpunk RPGs. It has some faults (a death spiral mechanic where taking damage results in being less able to fight, which means you will likely take more damage), but it works. Heck, it works well enough that Mark Chance of SPES Magna games released a commercial adventure for it that he ran at conventions (Metro Gnomes).

Geodesic Gnomes didn't win. It lost out to a game by Matt Jackson.

I ended up skipping a few more contests before trying my hand again in 2013, with A Flask Full of Gasoline. The rules that year required that the game be formatted in PocketMod format, and that it not use numbers. I pounded out a game inspired by that moment in The Crow where T-bird and his crew are shouting "Burn it up! Burn it up!" while washing down bullets with shots of vodka.

In the end, it turned into three pocket mods (one for the players, one for the GM, and one with an adventure) that I had a LOT of fun doing the layout and design on as well as the writing. It uses bullets, booze and matchsticks as resolution mechanics. It is pretty tongue-in-cheek and violent.

A Flask Full of Gasoline didn't win. It lost out to a game by Fred Bednarski.

The process of the 24 hour contest is a bit rough. For me it involves a one-hour brainstorm to start with and if nothing REALLY jumps out at me in that brainstorm, I drop the whole thing. If something clicks though, I take a few notes on paper about the mechanics and theme, fire up PhotoShop and InDesign and start working on layout and graphical elements right away - then start writing.

There is no time for editing - trust your guts and write to fit the space you've given yourself. It is a hell of a grind trying to get the whole thing together under deadline, which is why I start with the layout instead of finishing with it as you would with a normal published project. You don't eat properly, you don't sleep properly, and you probably ingest too much caffeine (and ephedrine). I would seriously consider finding a source of speed before launching on another 24 hour RPG contest entry.

But of course, I am planning to get involved in another 24 hour contest in the next week or so. Maybe I'll finish this interview first, maybe I'll do the contest first. We'll find out and try to keep you in the loop (and you can have some of my speed too).

9. What is your favourite published module other than yours?

A Thousand Dead Babies by Zzarchov Kowolski.

It has knocked my own Goblin Gully off my list of important 1st level adventures for a new group. It is twisted and fun and twisted. And it's investigative without ever getting boring as there are SO many leads in such a small setting that there's no way a party won't want to follow at least three of them at any one time.

I'm not going to spoil it with an in depth review, but if you haven't read it yet, you NEED to. This is gold.

10. If you could campaign in any world which would it be?

Something like Transhuman Space, otherwise Cyberpunk 2020. I don't read fantasy books, I am a science fiction junky. When I discovered Transhuman Space I read every rulebook and sourcebook cover to cover, skipping only the game rules stuff (because it's GURPS, so the rules don't matter to me). I was 100% enthralled and in love.

I like near future science fiction, I love cyberpunk but the genre feels pretty dated most of the time (I would love to play a SHORT Cyberpunk campaign, but an extended campaign these days would probably wear me down and the CP2020 system really needs some modernization).

11. What are the plans for the future of Dyson Logos?

I've got too many irons in the fire at once these days, and some projects are thus doomed to never be finished. With how much I suck at following through on things, I think I've figured out how to make this all work for me.

I'm currently writing up a campaign setting that I ran back in University called Snail Lords of the Salt Flats. In order to avoid being in charge of illustrating, laying out and producing the final game, I've arranged for Paolo Greco of the Lost Pages to take care of all that stuff and for him to publish it.

If that works, I'm seriously considering a series of similar projects - taking material from my older games and hammering it together and passing it on to other publishers to bring to market for me. "Dyson's Basement Files" or something like that. A series of unrelated projects and books published by various different publishers, but all in the same product line.

While I think that the old Dyson's Dodecahedron zine is dead, I have a few adventures that are half-finished that need to be completed - Dyson's MegaDelve, a revised and expanded version of Challenge of the Frog Idol, and The Cursed Dwarves of Shibole.

I'm also working on a series of maps to go with Zak Smith's Red and Pleasant Land that we're hoping to collaborate on turning into a booklet that could be a companion to that lovely book. And I got tagged recently by Marc Miller of Traveller fame to work on a series of maps for that classic setting.

And of course, 2 maps a week on the blog for the foreseeable future.

12. When you get a chance to play a character, what type of PC's do you like to play?

In my youth I was a fighting wizard. Figure out how to make a wizard with a sword, and that was what I wanted. Elves from classic D&D, Melnibonean noble sorcerers, psychic warriors...

Now... now it really depends. I'm usually found playing someone with a fairly high Charisma-type stat - either a rogue-type (in any game) or a cleric-type (if appropriate). In the Empire of the Petal Throne game I'm a wanna-be barbarian warrior (ex-military with a death wish) who isn't too bright. In the Star Wars game I'm running a hovering gun-droid. And in DCC I've got a halfling gentleman and an axe-mage (who runs around basically naked with a black leather hood over his head).

13. What are you most excited about in the RPG scene currently?

DIY awesomeness.

I've got a huge pile of zines that keeps growing. I spend $50 a month on books from Lulu because the DIY RPG scene just doesn't stop publishing awesome stuff.

The entry point to have the tools and technology to self-publish is at the lowest point it has ever been. If you have the imagination to put something together, then it can go to print at almost no cost to you.

EDITORS NOTE: SOMEONE NEEDS TO COME UP WITH A T-SHIRT "DIY awesomeness. '

14. Donuts or Pizza?

Yes. Although lately the pizza doesn't have tomato sauce anymore - I've had to switch to lower-acid pesto-based pizza... and it has been a DELICIOUS transition for me.

15. Your such a community minded guy, what draws you to this awesome OSR crowd?

I'll be honest, the OSR turned me off initially. The list of "zen moments of OSR gaming" reminds me every time of some of the worst games I've ever played, and seeing them touted as the keys to the scene turned me off almost as much as grognards actually engaging in edition wars in real life at the gaming store.

It's the DIY thing that has me here, combined with it being a place where I'm not the only person who loves B/X D&D in the crowd. It's the cheering on you get when you put something cool out there, instead of the nit-picking.

It's also the whole community vibe. I am very community-oriented. I release as much as I can for free while still being able to feed myself and put a bit of gas in the truck. When I have a game on my shelf that I know I won't be using, I give it away to someone who will use it. And people know this - so when I go looking for something, the community opens up and sends me stuff. It's like a giant lending library in that way. As with any community, I would be happier with a little less drama, but that's something you can't seem to manage anywhere.

16. Since you've stopped doing Characters for the blog, have considered doing some new ones? Now with the release of Fifth Edition. How about an Alice character?

Yeah, I've even got a few half-completed characters in the drafts folder of my blog, but I never get around to finishing them.

At some point I would like to make a couple of Alice characters using the Lamentations of the Flame Princess system it was designed for - one level 1, because that's what I do, and one at level 9 to see how it stacks up against the Lamentations version of the thief class.

Other games I should be posting characters for:

Empire of the Petal Throne

D&D5e

Cyberpunk 2020 (and maybe make a month of Cyberpunk on the blog - characters for all the major Cyber RPGs, maps to go with them, etc... that's an idea I should really get behind)

Into the Odd

A Flask Full of Gasoline

James Bond

etc...

So many games on my shelves...

17. Senators or Leafs?

I don't really follow basketball. :)

Also, Habs.

It's your turn Venger. An Interview with Venger Satanis from Kort'thalis Publishing

Originally published - Friday, October 2, 2015

1. How did you get your start roleplaying? What system did you use?

My aunt bought me the basic D&D magenta box when I was 10. My cousin (slightly older) got some other boxed set or modules that I can't remember. We were young, ignorant, and impatient. So, we described what we thought was the adventure (or an adventure) to each other without specific characters or dice, based on the pictures and our imaginations. This "session" lasted about 10 minutes. We won. It wasn't until a friend or his older brother taught me the ropes that I started playing D&D like it was meant to be played.

2. Tell me about your blog? How did it start?

I've been writing all my life – stories, poems, songs, scripts, essays, thoughts, ideas, adventures, lists, etc. Before the roleplaying blog, I had a blog on the Cthulhu Mythos, black magic, Satanism, Fourth Way, the Left Hand Path, and so forth. Once I began to get into RPGs again, it seemed the most natural thing in the world for me to start publicly writing about old school gaming on the internet.

3. How and when did you discover OSR?

After D&D 4e, I kind of gave up on RPGs. RPGs seemed to be evolving [well, we say "evolve", but what we really mean is change] at such a gradual pace (from my perspective) that I couldn't see how wide a gap there was between what I started with and what had ended my love for RPGs.

A couple years after that, I had heard about Dungeon Crawl Classics and that led me to certain blogs and old school enthusiasts, then Matthew Finch's "Old School Primer". I decided to give RPGs, specifically D&Desque play-styles of the 70's and 80's another try before discontinuing the hobby altogether. Luckily, I had tons of fun (that was playtesting Liberation of the Demon Slayer, by the way) and realized that I still loved RPGs – just not what some games had become.

4. What was the first adventure you published?

That would be Liberation of the Demon Slayer. I just ran it again for a one-shot last week. It was fun going back. I know what fans are saying about it being a little rough around the edges or a "hot mess". But that's part of its charm, too. Oh well, you've got to start somewhere.

5. Tell me a little bit about the last few projects you've produced.

Crimson Dragon Slayer is the big one. That's my attempt at crafting an OSR type RPG with a few modern sensibilities while also making it a sort of parody of science-fantasy RPGs. It tries to be so awesome that it also resembles something kind of ridiculous and occasionally god-awful. Purposefully, though and with tongue-in-cheek; as though we're playing it ironically from the get-go, instead of many years later and suffering through the game mechanics and art we dislike (hello, Rifts). It's not for everybody, but most that have tried it think Crimson Dragon Slayer is hilarious – even just reading the rules.

The Outer Presence is another one I'm proud of. It's one-tenth the level of gonzo, but uses roughly the same system as CDS – d6 dice pools. It's similar to what West End Games was doing in the 80's with Paranoia, Star Wars, and Ghostbusters; yet borrows from 5e, such as Advantage and Disadvantage (truly an evolutionary leap). Anyways, The Outer Presence is investigative horror. I like to bring Lovecraftian themes and/or the Cthulhu

Mythos into most of my creations. The scenario makes up most of the book. It's like a cannibal exploitation film from the 70's. At least, that was the inspiration.

6. What is your favorite OSR clone?

I'm still a fan of Dungeon Crawl Classics. It's a big book and big game. I never use even half of it, but it's still a good, weird time. Each retro-clone has something cool about it, something it does especially well. DCC and Fantastic Heroes & Witchery are the only ones I've used multiple times (Astonishing Swordsmen & Sorcerers of Hyperborea only once – but still love it), the rest I just borrow ideas from when Game Mastering.

The case could also be made for 5th edition D&D. It's also a kind of modernist clone of original D&D, though aesthetically it seems "off" to me. The artwork and layout is too polished and fancy while also occasionally looking chincy like the new CGI footage George Lucas shoehorned into Star Wars. At first, you might be thinking, "Neat!" But then the honeymoon is over and you're like, "Man, that's going in the wrong direction."

7. What are you currently playing?

Currently, I've just been running Crimson Dragon Slayer. Months ago, I ran The Outer Presence a couple times. Both of those as a Game Master. I also played in a new zombie game that an acquaintance of mine is play testing and the Ghostbusters RPG. Every once in awhile, it's fun to just play, instead of running the game.

8. Your such a fan of H.P. Lovecraft, what sets his writing apart for you?

You can tell that Lovecraft was a weirdo. He indulgently wallows in the stuff he's interested in, which most people aren't. He tries to fool you into thinking that he's not obsessed with cosmic horror, black magic, and alien gods – but he definitely is. Modern writers don't have that pretense of not being obsessed – they just pile on the depravity, gross things, or blood. There's no subtlety.

I also think Lovecraft was a visionary. He tapped into something that still resonates today, almost a century later. That's powerful stuff.

9. What is your favorite published module other than yours?

One of my favorite, recently published modules is Qelong. Carcosa is also precious to me (it could use a lot more unusual tables, however), but it's much bigger than a module. I own a lot that I haven't read through or ran because I'm constantly working on my own stuff, play testing that, and also being a husband, father, dude with a job, etc.

10. If you could campaign in any world which would it be?

When I think of that kind of "world", it brings me back to the 80's and 90's published campaign settings of TSR D&D, such as Dark Sun, Ravenloft, Spelljammer, etc. I love a mix of sci-fi and fantasy, also post-apocalypse stuff. So, anything like that but weird and gonzo… and Lovecraftian! Basically, I write about what I love and everything I publish starts out as material I want to use.

11. What are the plans for Torth your community campaign setting?

I'm still waiting for the clamor of fans and stampeding herd of Torth lovers to force my hand and put out parts 2 and 3 (Revelry of Torth being the 1st). Nothing yet, though. Haha. Soon after Alpha Blue, I'll start working on more Torth stuff. And I'm still cool with publishers taking up the Torth reigns and running with it. There's no license or restriction. Go forth and Torth it up!

12. When you get a chance to play a character, what type of PC do you like to play?

I oscillate between my go-to character type and trying to widen my horizons – inhabiting or pretending to be a character I've never been before. I like to get into character without being too actor-y about it. But my usual thing is a magic-user who tends toward the dark side, probably an elf. Occasionally, a rogue or thief type.

EDITORS NOTE: Venger wrote a cool class - The Baleful Sorcerer Of Tsathag'kha

13. What are you most excited about in the RPG scene currently?

The hope that paper & pencil RPGs see a huge resurgence that will bring in way more people, media attention, talent, technology, and money. I feel with that will come competition, which will make all of our respective jobs harder but ultimately, force us to evolve or die. And by "evolve", in this case, I mean get better, make progress, etc.

Just imagine if role playing products and the people who played them were as ubiquitous as i-pods/pads/phones. The influx would make companies, groups, and people compete. The bottom of the barrel would be avoided and the cream would rise to the top. Instead of celebrities bringing notice to games like D&D, we might live in a world where D&D would make a GM, player, designer, or artist an actual celebrity (in the real world, not a celebrity within RPG circles).

I mean, why shouldn't RPGs be that popular? When done right, it's like watching an interactive movie or reading a choose-your-own-adventure book – except socially with your friends!

14. Rum, Bourbon, beer or none of the above?

Mountain Dew is my poison, though I'm trying to cut back. I also like Grape Crush a lot. Every once in a while (like 2 or 3 times a year) I'll have a couple beers or glasses of wine, but mostly it's soda, water, or milk.

15. I love the 33% mechanic you came up with (and I use it often!) How did you come about this?

During a game, players would ask me things like, "Is there some kind of symbol or design on it?" Maybe it was a tapestry, sword, altar, or something else. Doesn't matter. They saw something potentially awesome in their mind's eye and were asking if I might be seeing it the same way.

I'm not the kind of Game Master that just says, "No." if I don't have to. But I'm not always going to say, "Yes." either. Obviously, I thought, there needs to be a mechanism for saying yes and no without me giving it serious thought every 10 or 15 minutes something like that comes up.

It's not just player questions, either. Sometimes an idea will come to me, something devious, craft, super-weird, or tangential. Should it always be up to me to decide? What if I'm torn between several options?

I just decided in the moment one day to give something a 33% (or 2 in 6 if I'm feeling d6ish that day) of occurring. It worked really well, and I decided to keep doing it ever since.

16. Tell me about Draconic Magazine?

Basically, it's another blog like my old school gaming one via google. My personal blog is just me typing away about actual play experiences and what's going on with Kort'thalis Publishing. Draconic Magazine covers more role playing content, reviews, interviews, etc.

Originally, I planned for Draconic Magazine to draw gamers like some of the more established gaming hubs with forums and the like. It doesn't do that. It also doesn't make any money. But it looks cool and gives me another place to post cool shit, so I keep it around… plus, it's paid for. Might as well use it.

17. Who does your art for your books? It's awesome!

Thanks! I use several great artists. My latest find is a man named Bojan Sucevic. But over the few years I've been doing this I've had luck acquiring illustrations from Zarono, Randy Musseau, Terry Pavlet, Monstark, and many more. Looking outside the RPG community allows me to include artwork that's a little bit different than what you'd find everywhere else.

Also, Faustie and HELMUTT have both done several of my covers.

18. What are the plans for Kort'thalis Publishing this year? Anything in the works?

I just finished another little module for Crimson Dragon Slayer (and O5R systems – that's what I call OSR and 5th edition D&D). It's called No Escape from New York. It's silly, dark, sleazy, strange, and ridiculous at times. Never a dull moment. The adventure details what might happen if a group of adventurers suddenly got warped into New York City, circa 1983. Not the real one, but an alternate reality. More great artwork by Bojan Sucevic in that one!

Now, I turn my attention to AlphaBlue. As one Kickstarter backer insight fully revealed, it's my take on a 70's porn film named The Satisfiers of Alpha Blue. But, this being for a RPG, it'll have a bit less XXX and more campy, screwball fun like the Ice Pirates and Heavy Metal films.

19. You've had a lot success with Kickstarter. Why do you think that is? What have you learned from the process?

Here's the key to being a modest Kickstarter success…

1. Don't be a fuckup.

2. Only promise what you can accomplish.

3. Listen to your backers/customers/audience.

20. A lot of publishers have been using Patreon, have you considered it?

Yeah, I've considered it. I guess I'm just not there yet. I don't need a tip jar for the stuff I'm already getting paid for. Although, it would be nice to get something for all the freebies on Draconic Magazine. On the other hand, posting that stuff gets me noticed and gets my books into gamers' hands… and that stuff gets me money.

So, I definitely don't need it. It almost feels like double-dipping. I'm not comfortable with doing it myself even though a lot of awesome and creative people are and it seems to be working well for them.

——

Thanks for asking me for an interview, hoss. Happy gaming!

You can follow what Venger is up to

http://draconicmagazine.com/

http://vengersatanis.blogspot.ca/

It's your turn Frank! - Interview with Frank Turfler from Middle Kingdoms Adventure and Trading Co

Originally published Saturday, October 24, 2015

1. How did you get your start roleplaying? What system did you use?

I got started in 1981 with Moldvay Basic D&D, I was 11. I remember being in a game store in the Whiteflint Mall in Montgomery County, MD. and the first thing that caught my eye was the AD&D DM's Guide on display behind the coolest miniatures. That day I bought my first mini and shortly after my Grandmother bought me the Basic Boxed set. I didn't know anyone else who played D&D at the time, so it was just me, my younger brother, and Nana trying to figure it all out. It wasn't until a few years later 1982 or 1983 after moving to Western PA that I started playing AD&D regularly with a group of friends. Most of us still keep in touch today.

EDITOR NOTE: Nana playing D&D is friggin awesome!

2. Tell me about your art? How did it start?

I've always been drawing something for as long as I can remember. It probably started with the introduction of solid food. I got serious though at 12 when a friend and I started our own comic book. I continued drawing comics and fantasy art through High School and then later attended Parsons School of Design in NYC. Paying bills as an artist didn't pan out so well for me so much of that creativity was poured into editing movies and TV shows.

3. How and when did you discover OSR?

I got started in 1981 with Moldvay Basic D&D, I was 11. I remember being in a game store in the Whiteflint Mall in Montgomery County, MD. and the first thing that caught my eye was the AD&D DM's Guide on display behind the coolest miniatures. That day I bought my first mini and shortly after my Grandmother bought me the Basic Boxed set...

But seriously, after High School, there wasn't much time for D&D so I took a brief 22 hiatus, coma really, and when I came back to gaming 3 or 4 years ago, I just opened my old AD&D books and started playing again. I was running a game for my teenage daughters (at their request actually) and in my search for new adventures I found Dragonsfoot.org and it probably snowballed from there.

4. Tell me a little bit about the last few projects you've worked on.

I'm always working on something. Although it's been a while, I try to contribute as much as I can to the DCC zine "Crawling Under A Broken Moon" and the AD&D Magazine"&". Much of my time currently is spent working on illustrations for Genius Loci's Pyramid of the Lost King, Cartography for Darksmile Games' "Fae Nightmares" for Savage Worlds, Cartography for Obatron Productions new Savage Worlds setting "Retribution" witch is currently running a Kickstarter. As well as illustrations and maps for my own projects.

5. What are you currently playing?

I run a semi-regular Labyrinth Lord (B/X) Barrowmaze game for my family and occasionally I have time, I play with my local group of friends in a 5E home brew campaign. I also get an occasional Savage Worlds one shot in and there are SO many other games I'm itching to play. When I came back to the gaming world a few years ago, I was amazed at how the entire landscape had changed. There were a lot of new games that i had never heard of and new ones seemed to be popping up every day. Since then I've been collecting RPGs and reading them like novels.

Just a few that I've been itching to try are Fate (both Core and Accelerated), Dungeon World, Numenéra and the Strange, and Beyond The Wall, but that probably only scratched the surface.

Editor's note: I just checked out beyond the wall for the first time, wow! This looks like fun.

6. If you could campaign in any world which would it be?

If it wasn't my own home brew world, it would have to be Greyhawk.

Editor's note: I asked about Franks home brew world…

Well it's in a galaxy far far away...

or maybe some inter dimensional pocket? Maybe its just all in my head. ? GET IT OUT! GET IT OUT!

Seriously though, I used to make these epic worlds like Egeszfold, a world where the original race of Egeszfold, the Deému, were created by the god Egysten to tend Egeszfold as his garden, but in time the Dému grew proud and began to tend to the garden for their own pleasure ignoring Egysten and seeking to become gods themselves. They erected five towers to rip a hole in the fabric of space and time and open the very doors of heaven itself, but when they did they created the Sundering and opened doors to great cosmic horrors that exist in the universe that had since fallen into a deathlike sleep—horrors that were never meant for this world. Egysten chose to save his creation from the evil they unleashed on themselves and destroyed the towers in a great cataclysm. With an ancient evil now present in the world and the world in chaos, Egeszfold fell into a dark age.

Xanadu, a hedonistic utopian society established by pilgrims on the Asteroid, Shakespeare 2112. There the pilgrims built a shining city in the heavens, a marvel of technology and order. To maintain order and balance, the Founder created a quasi-religion. A large part of this new religion is that a person's maximum age is strictly legislated. When people reach their final day they participate in a ceremony known as Inception. Not everyone however participates in Inception, over time there have been some who have been elected by The Founder's Ghost to remain. This elite group is known as the Paternals. The Paternals act as a governing council and high priests of the Founder's Order. No one is allowed to see a Paternal directly and as such their actual existence is shrouded in myth. Of course not everyone in Xanadu believes in the doctrine of doctrine of The Founder's Order and for those who do not believe there is only one way of avoiding Inception RUN. There's one catch; no one is allowed on or off Shakespeare 2112.

More recently I've been interested in small local worlds—like the size of a large rural community or an area contained by major geographic borders like mountain ranges, seas, or weather phenomena like dense fog or violent storms.

7. How is your Patreon going?

My Patreon is going rather well. I like to think of myself as an accidental cartographer. Making maps was never something that I thought I would be doing outside of notes for my own adventures. When I came back to gaming, I started buying miniatures and needed terrain and battle maps to go along with them. I discovered DMScotty's and TheDMGinfo's Youtube channel and started making custom and modular cardboard tiles. When I realized that I could just create my own custom maps and print them out, making them available for everyone was the natural next step.

8. Tell me about the middle kingdoms blog, what's going on over there!

The Middle Kingdoms blog was started as a diary of my efforts to learn how to design, write, publish and market a style of adventure module that would fit my gaming lifestyle—not enough time for prep and only 2-3 hours of table time per game. Since then it has grown to include Free Map Friday where I try to produce a location map or battle map every week (I do miss a week here and there when life gets busy.)

9. Have you written any adventures that we should know about?

About a year ago I helped my then 7 year-old son publish an adventure, "Raiders of the Forgotten Treasure" it was a blast. He designed the entire dungeon crawl encounter complete with several monsters which he designed himself. I helped him put it into words and of course did all the maps, art, layout, and design.

I'm still working on the serial adventure project that kicked off on my blog, and in May I got the White Starbug and started writing a Gothic Horror/ Sci-fi adventure, Heart of Darkness—my take on a Ravenloft Space Opera. Heart of Darkness is just about finished I just need to play test it (any takers?) and finish all the art and cartography. Its a bit of a different take on traditional OSR modules in that I drew a lot of inspiration from modern games like Dungeon World and Numenéra in the presentation of information. I wanted an adventure you could pick up and run with very little prep and doesn't get in the way of YOUR story. In the process, with help from Eric Lamoureux it's also been converted to Savage Worlds. I truly do have some big plans for the Heart of Darkness adventure (the horror/Sci-fi adventure) I'd like to make it into an interactive PDF with a soundtrack, sound effects and some visual treats too. Here's a little soundtrack I threw together for a promo I'm planning to produce.

10. I noticed that you work with the Phoneix Children's hospital, tell me about more about that?

When I was setting up my Patreon I wanted to use some of the money to help others in need; my son was in the hospital, phoenix Children's Hospital actually, and while sitting in the hospital I asked my family what charity I should give some money to. Their response—Duh! The Phoenix Children's Hospital Foundation. I have a goal to be able to run some games there in the future.

11. When you get a chance to play a character, what type of PC do you like to play?

While the personalities of my PC's tend to be very complex, the type of PC I play is usually pretty basic—Fighters usually. Once in a while if I'm feeling adventurous I may play a Dwarf (Eastern European accent though; none of that Scottish nonsense.)

12. What are you most excited about in the RPG scene currently?

There's just so much out there it's hard to pick. I still get excited to play all the old stuff, but I'm really looking forward to playing some Cypher System games, running a DCC funnel for the family, and that new Goonies inspired RPG. What, there isn't a Goonies inspired RPG? There should be. Who wants to help me make it?

13. Sushi or Dim Sum?

When given a choice of either or I always pick both. BTW you gonna eat those pierogis?

Editor's note: The local church in my area has a fundraiser once a month, it's all you can eat perogys! I'm going next week. If you've never

had a perogy, go find some! They are delicious.

14. What are the plans for Middle Kingdoms Adventure and trading co this year? Anything in the works?

There's always something in the works and there is currently a top secret project in the works.

15. And of course anything else you'd like to add to this interview?

I could add so much more, but right now my wife is staring me down because I need to help with dinner. :)

Editor's Note: I seem to have this same problem.

It's your turn Johua! - Interview with Genius Loci Games

What?! Gah! *Runs and hides under a table* - (Response from Joshua when I emailed him!)

Originally published - Thursday, November 12, 2015

1. How did you get your start roleplaying? What system did you use?

I've had an interest since I was a little kid in the 80s. The cartoon series of Dungeons & Dragons was one of my favorites growing up and I caught every episode during the first order run. So the name was already there in my mind from an early age. In middle school a few friends played outside of school given that I went to a Catholic School and D&D was for the devil. So I missed my shot there. I finally started playing in AIT in 1999 with a TSR box set that I picked up at the Ft. Leonard Wood PX during weekend pass. I don't know what edition it was, just that it was gold, and there was a dagger with a dragon relief in a pile of trash in the small dungeon the box set came with.

2. How and when did you discover OSR?

That is difficult to answer. I think the best way to put it is that I accidentally fell into it. I was actually looking for some of White Wolf's Swords & Sorcery OGL stuff and being that I was working third shift at the time and was doing this search after pulling a double (so 2200 – 1400) I typed in Swords & Wizardry instead. I found the 3rd printing of Matt's Core edition and was in love. I didn't go to sleep that day and just read the pdf over and over, glorying in the system. I think I sent the pdf to Staples that day to print (didn't know about lulu yet). Since then I have tried and played with a lot of OSR game systems but S&W Core (especially 3rd printing) is still my go to.

3. Tell me about Genius Loci Games, How did it start?

I think 4 years ago I was starting to collect my ideas for a Celtic themed setting that I was haphazardly running for my daughter and her friends down on digital paper. I had no idea if I was doing right, no idea if I was following the "rules as written" for S&W or any of that stuff so I decided to submit to the mythmere forums one of the race-as-classes I made for my daughter's game; The Cat-Sith (This would later reappear as the Chesh in New Class Options).

Unfortunately, I think the forums were down that day so I ended going to this new fangled thing I had barely heard of called Google+ and the Swords & Wizardry Fan Discussion Page. People liked the Chesh, gave me some awesome feedback and I kind of just joined the community.

A few weeks later Erik Tenkar started doing his 30 days of content block, and me not knowing anything else though this was normal, so I started a blog to showcase my original content. Genius Loci Games was born. As a "studio" it came actually from you. I think you were showing off your ideas for the 20131-page dungeon contest and I was like "I can do that!" and … I couldn't, no way I could get it to one page. So I did it in two, released it to RPGnow as the first Two-Page Adventure (The Nest).

4. Tell me about your latest release "The Bards Of Ur"?

"The Bards of Ur" is a 5e adventure that is a lot of fun, it is a race against time to stop a death metal Bard Troupe from unleashing a chained demon lord into the mortal plane and then dragging it down into the Nine Hells.. But not before eating most of the population. There's werewolves, ghosts, nobles names Dread … it was a hell of a lot of fun to write, and was really a venting process in a way for

me. I always try to be the upbeat, "show them wonder" adventure writer, and all to often it feels like I'm the weird guy in the room for having that mentality so I just went nuts, blasted some folk metal and cut loose.

EDITORS NOTE: F**K YAH!"

5. What are you currently playing?

I am currently playing Mane Tales which is an original system game for my daughters about magical ponies learning about friendship hides nail file and that has been a joy. Watching my four-year-old pick up on tabletop gaming and start to do more than roll dice and move around a board has been … well, again a joy. I am also running a 5e game on Fantasy Grounds twice a month, having just taken over for the previous DM who ran the game for over a year.

6. If you could campaign in any world which would it be?

Oh man, that's a tough a tough one! Do I have to choose just one? While I love the Forgotten Realms I feel its played out, so that one is out. I would love a shot at Mystara, Savage World's Pinebox, Tx/East Texas University, The Lost Lands, and so many others … more than I think anyone could hope to play in a fulfilling way in a lifetime.

7. How is your Patreon going?

The Patreon is going pretty good. I have 14 extremely dedicated patrons who have stuck with me through thick and thin, and who are very supportive of both the process and the styles of adventures I produce. Right now I'm averaging 3 to 4 a month with a good mix of short to long adventure (so 2 to 12 pages). I hope to one day reach the final goal, which would allow me to put my kids in a drop off day care for a few hours a week so I could get some dedicated writing time in, but that isn't something I pushing hard at.

8. Tell me about the "Adventures In Basq" Module?

Adventures in Basq was and may be the only Kickstarter I will ever do. It is a massive Sandpark adventure that takes place in the southern reaches of the Usarm Setting and holds a lot of the lore answers to the setting as a whole. The text is pretty massive, not Barakus or Rappan Aku massive but its big. At last page count it was sitting at 55 pages without art, layout, or any of the fancy stuff with a 10pt boring font.

While there is a lot of detail I also left a lot up to the Referee as well, one of my main design philosophies is that the Referee is god and that his or her will should take the forefront. So I may give a summary for an area that is two paragraphs long and some suggestions but beyond that every instance of that area will be different from Referee to Referee. That however, isn't always the case, the dungeons, the various factions, and so on are pretty well detailed, but things not in the immediate area of the setting (i.e. the Rift Bridge, The Salt Pillers, The Great Seas, etc) are only thinly described.

9. You've released an adventure using the Mini6 rules from anti paladin games, how do you find writing for that system?

Two actually, Paranormal Investigators & Exterminators, and Good-bye American P.I.E.. I love mini-six, it is by far my second favorite system and I wish there was more support for it. Designing for it can be tricky because of how the combat system is but as a whole it is fun and quick and I can't wait to get my hands into it again.

10. What is one of your favorite adventures other than something that you've released?

You're the Lizardmen of Illzathatch jumps to mind immediately, I also love Grimesgate by Matt Finch and have used as the Rosetta stone in a lot of my early adventures. Going back in time the 3.5 Ravenloft adventure "Expedition to Castle Ravenloft" will always hold a special place for me as it was my first adventure, as will the "Mask of Death" because of its association with my favorite movie "Gamers 2: Dorkness Rising".

11. Your modules contain some amazing art & cartography, who are these awesome artists?

Frank Turfler is my go to guy. The man is a genius with both a pencil and mouse and I work with him as much as I can. He is the primary artist for "Adventures in Basq", and has done covers and interiors in a lot of my work. Many of my Patreon adventures piggy back off of his Patreon map releases, trying to show case the different uses for his maps. I also have a great working relationship with Glynn Seal of Monkeyblood design who is the cartographer for "Adventures in Basq" and who designed the new logo for GeniusLoci Games. Glynn is amazing … and is very patient. Seriously the man should be canonized. I also have worked with the super awesome Eric Quigley who did the cover for "Adventures in Basq" and is on the short list should I ever have the money to hire him again. Finally there is Danny Prescott who has done some work for "Adventures in Basq" including the city shot of Basq itself. He does really good work and doesn't get near enough credit.

12. When you get a chance to play a character, what type of PC do you like to play?

Erik is going to think I'm copying off of him but I typically play a Dwarven Cleric when the system allows for it and the roll isn't already taken. Otherwise I play a Dread Pirate Roberts style ranged fighter who typically annoys most of the groups I've played with … so I stick to the dwarf.

13. What are you most excited about in the RPG scene currently?

A lot actually. I am really excited for the upcoming unity version of Fantasy Grounds. While I love in person gaming and I don't think anything can ever truly emulate it, I feel with how our society is changing VTTs are the future, and FG is, in my opinion, the best of them. There is also a really fun dark sci-fi adventure coming out that I had the privilege to play test that has me excited, because it is going to blow some minds. Outside of that there is the obvious "Stuff from Frog Gods" that I was actually able to afford this time around.

14. Hockey Or Football? And bonus question Italian or Asian cuisine?

Well, you're going to kill me but neither; I'm a baseball fan. As for food, the last name is De Santo so of course I like Asian.

15. What are the plans for Genuis Loci Games this year? Anything in the works?

The main goal right now is to get "Adventures in Basq" out the door. After that my primary focus is on finishing the development of Mane Tales and Eldritch (A Modern Paranormal take on S&W Core) and releasing them to the wider world in one form or another. Unfortunately I may end up shopping those around instead of releasing them myself, as the price of putting out a Grade A professional product is beyond me, and I am still very doubtful of doing another kickstarter.

Thank you, Shane! It was an honor and a half!

It's your turn James - A sit down with James Spahn of Barrel Rider Games

Originally published -Wednesday, December 2, 2015

1. How did you get your start roleplaying? What system did you use?

I was 8 years old for most of 1987 and my 14 year old brother was really into AD&D. I'd look through the books because they had such cool artwork and talked about wizards, and elves and magic. I didn't quite _know_ what I was reading, but I knew I liked it. Then, a few weeks later I walked into the local flea market and saw this hardcover on the shelf with three familiar old friends: Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, and Princess Leia. West End Games' Star Wars Roleplaying Game was calling to me.

Even with a very rudimentary understanding of what role-playing games are, I had never even grasped the idea of a role-playing game set in the Star Wars universe. I purchased it instantly, after begging my father for an advance on my allowance. Here was a world I had been familiar with since birth. The rules were light, quick and easy to understand. And all I had to do was raid the board games in the closet for dice! The next weekend I invited my friend Doug over and we began adventuring in a galaxy far, far away.

2. How and when did you discover the OSR?

I discovered it initially when I stumbled across Labyrinth Lord while meandering around the web one day. To be honest, at first I was dismissive. "Who would want to play these OLD games? I played those when I was a kid - these newer games are so much more rich and complex!"

Well, eventually I ate my own words. I got sick of the endless flood of supplements for D&D 3.5 and having to keep up with players who could afford to buy every book the day it came out and expected me to recall every feat, skill and modifier over the course of the product line. I got frustrated and actually stopped DMing for a while right around when D&D 4e came out. I was just burnt out.

Of course, gaming gets in your blood and you can't get away from it. So while puttering around the web and discovered Matt Finch's "Primer to Old School Gaming."

I fell in love. THIS was the type of gaming I'd wanted. Fast, approachable, fun - something where I didn't have to slog through an endless stream supplements and could instead do what felt, holding to faith in myself and my players' faith in me to be a fair, fun DM. I gave Labyrinth Lord a second look and fell in love all over again. It was like returning to my halcyon days of gaming where all I needed was my Rules Cyclopedia and a few friends. It felt so good, so freeing. Gaming wasn't a chore anymore that required a rolling carry-on bag worth of books to play.

3. Tell me about Barrel Rider Games, How did it start?

Barrel Rider Games started because of my wife. She looked at me one day and said "James, if you want to keep buying gaming books you need to make more money." So, I decided to use my addiction to feed my addiction. I decided to write a few Labyrinth Lord variant classes and sell them for a buck. I did that for years. Every time I had an idea on the long drive to work, I'd scratch it down and then start fiddling with mechanics that night. To date, I've put out somewhere around 70 Labyrinth Lord Classes or so, along with a few odds and ends here and there.

To be honest, BRG was also (at least in part) a back door resume in hopes of getting freelance work on some of my favorite games. To date, that's worked out rather successfully. I've gotten to work on products for Cubicle 7

Entertainment and Frog God Games over the past few years and am hoping to get some more freelance work as it becomes available.

When I started doing White Box stuff, I did it because I saw there were no releases (or very few) on the game line. I said "OK, this is either a dead line or an under served market. So, let's give it a shot!"

Needless to say, my success in White Box and later with White Star has exceeded my wildest dreams.

4. Tell me about your latest release "White Box Chivalry"?

White Box Chivalry came about from a combination of things. One of the iconic images of fantasy is the "Knight in Shining Armor," and while that certainly has its place in fantasy gaming (as shown in the Paladin and Cavalier), I always felt like you shouldn't have to be a specific class to be a knight. Anyone could be knighted. Heck, Paul McCartney is a knight. So I set about writing a system that would allow any character, regardless of class or race, to become a knight. Granted, it is easier to do so if you already have the martial training it can be an easier road - but I thought it would be cool to have Magic-Users or even halflings who could find themselves suddenly knighted and dealing with the politics of protecting their land and obeying a lord. I also tried to step away from the "Honorable Knight" trope, because knights were not bound by honor. They were bound by their lord. So WB Chivalry uses an Accolade Points system that's based on keeping a character's liege lord happy - which can be tough. The whole idea for that came from Jaime Lannister, a favorite character of mine. In the novel Clash of Kings he says:

"So many vows...they make you swear and swear. Defend the king. Obey the king. Keep his secrets. Do his bidding. Your life for his. But obey your father. Love your sister. Protect the innocent. Defend the weak. Respect the gods. Obey the laws. It's too much. No matter what you do, you're forsaking one vow or the other."

I wanted to capture that conflict or some fragment of it, mechanically.

5. What are you currently playing?

Playing? Nothing. I'm in the early planning stages of a Barrowmaze campaign, using BRW's Adventure's Dark and Deep. I plan on using T1 - The Village of Hommlet as a springboard for things and then replacing Nulb and the Temple of Elemental Evil with Helix and the Barrowmaze.

EDITORS NOTE: This is a fantastic idea!

6. If you could campaign in any world which would it be?

Star Wars. Without a doubt, without a question: Star Wars. It was my first game and it's still my favorite. I'd love to be a Jedi Knight.

7. You are an extremely prolific writer, where does this all come from?

Long car rides, mostly. I have an hour commute to work down a rural road - so I spend a lot of time in my own head. I get a fun idea in my head and just kind of scramble it out onto paper as fast as possible, then go back and refine it. My dear friend Jason McCartan once said I'm like a hyperactive terrier - I grab an idea and shake it, run around the room excitedly wagging my tale until finally collapsing from exhaustion.

8. Tell me about White Star, where did it come from, how did it all start? What are your plans for the future of White Star?

White Star was born out of a few things. First and foremost is my love of Swords &Wizardry WhiteBox. It's a simple, flexible system that does everything I need it to and gets out of the

way when I don't need it. I asked myself "What if Gary and Dave had made a Sci-fi game using the mechanics of D&D instead of a fantasy game?" That got me thinking quite a bit. Then, it naturally evolved into "What kind of sci-fi game would *I* write using those mechanics?"

Initially, White Star was just going to be a 28-page add-on for White Box. It grew in the writing. By the time I hit 64 or so pages I decided to make it into a stand-alone product. That changed things quite a bit, because I had to go back over Matt and Marv's work on S&W White Box and make sure I kept the tone and concepts of their work present in White Star. It was a conscious effort to make sure that White Star and White Box were 100% compatible. My big reason for this was twofold: One, I wanted players to be able to use fantasy products in their sci-fi campaigns to increase supplement availability and two, Spelljammer is awesome.

A lot of readers of White Star immediately saw the influence of Star Wars in its pages - and rightfully so. I'd be lying if I said Star Wars didn't have a huge impact on White Star. But White Star is more than just lightsabers with serial numbers filed off. Flash Gordon the classic comics to the Buster Crabbe serials and the fantastic 1980 film, played a huge role as did both the original and remake of Battlestar Galactica. I wanted White Star to be fast and loose - pulp sci-fi at its most distilled. Star Wars is probably the biggest influence on White Star, but not in the way people think. Ralph McQuarrie's concept art for Star Wars and the original Battlestar Galactica played a larger role than anything else in my "vision" of White Star. I even have a framed picture of "Luke vs. Vader" by McQuarrie above my writing desk and it was there the whole time I was writing White Star.

9. What is one of your favorite adventures other than something that you've released?

I'm a big fan of Barrowmaze . It's a megadungeon done right in my opinion and has that gothic feel I love so much. Greg did a great job on Barrowmaze Complete and it was worth every penny.

I also really enjoy Tatooine Manhunt for the Star Wars RPG. It captures that "Star Wars Feel" perfectly.

10. When you get a chance to play a character, what type of PC do you like to play?

Heroes. I love playing heroes. Whether Jedi Knight, Paladins, Farmboys turned Wizards - it doesn't matter. I want to believe in Good vs Evil and that Good is a true and active force in this world. RPGs and the characters I play let me do that.

Doing the right thing is hard as hell in the real world. It's easy to be a selfish person our day to day lives, so why would I want to fantasize about that when I sit down with my friends?

11. What are you most excited about in the RPG scene currently?

Call of Cthulhu 7th edition has got me pretty hyped. I'm also really pleased with Fantasy Flight Games' line of Star Wars products. In the more OSR realm of things, I'm looking forward to Pete Spahn's Duchy ofValnwall book - his Amherth setting is fantastic.

12. Would you rather be a Mandolorian or a Nautolan?

Nautolan, obviously. They smile more and they're fantastic swimmers. Any clown can rock a jetpack.

13. What are the plans for Barrel Rider Games this year? Anything in the works?

Wow... let's see...

White Star Companion, White Box Gothic, White Box Compendium, a few White Star setting books, a few more PWYW classes like the Uttin for White Star, Brainburn: Psychic Characters for DCC, and I've got some freelance work lined up as well. These are all in various stages of production, so I try not to give concrete release dates on anything.

14. Where can we find you on the web?

The best place to find me is on G+ and I try to stay active in the White Star G+Community as well. Barrel Rider Games products can be found on RPG Now and DriveThru RPG.

Thank you very much James I appreciate it. - Shane

It's your turn Joe! - An Interview with Joe Johnston of Taskboy Games

Originally published Thursday, February 4, 2016

1. How did you get your start roleplaying? What system did you use?

Due to poor archiving, I cannot nail down the precise year I started, but it was in the late seventies. I was below the age of ten.

Some good friends, with whom I had my most splendiferous childhood experiences (most of which involved madly running around basements, woods and other areas devoid of parental oversight), showed me TSR's B2: The Keep on the Borderlands. The back cover of that module informs my attraction to lurid colors. And the dice were nifty.

While we may have started that module, I more clearly remember going through the otherworldly Q1:Queen of the Demonweb Pits. When I finally got my own copy of that module just a few years ago, I was amazed how much we missed in that early run.

At the start of the eighties, my family moved and I entered a new school on Cape Cod (the school had literally opened 4 years earlier). In my classroom, there was a copy of Holmes' Basic D&D. I was flummoxed by the chits.

Later in high school, I joined a role playing club and was introduced to Gamma World and Top Secret.

It is accurate enough to say that the AD&D 1e system and Moldvay's B/X have seeped into my DNA. Mentzer's BECMI stuff is still considered by me to be the "new edition." I do not have any newer editions of D&D.

My playing style has always been "theatre of the mind" stuff. The idea of using maps and minis just seemed like too much work. These days, the approach taken by utilities like Roll20 where a map can be uploaded and partially obscured is great. That is far more fun that mapping anyway.

2. How and when did you discover OSR?

If my distant memories are hazy, you would expect more recent events to have more clarity. And you would be wrong.

After the 80s, I drifted away from role playing to LARP as a rock musician for a time and then later as a computer programmer (which continues to pay the bills).

In the first decade of the twenty first century, I used eBay to expand my collection of TSR Gazetteers. When Gygax died, I started looking a bit more online to see what the state of the hobby was and very likely it was then that I came across James Maliszewski's most excellent blog Grognardia, which is still a consulted resource even today.

James writes about the hobby like a well-read adult with a college education and everything. He articulated the idea that there is something special about those early years of TSR (when D&D was a bigger commercial hit than Monopoly) and that that is worth celebrating.

James' blog led me to Google Plus, in which I previously had little interest. I started my own OSR blog in 2011 and started writing the adventure Manse onMurder Hill, which is part of a series that extrapolates what might have happened after the events of The Keep on the Borderland.

This is a long-winded way of saying that my involvement with OSR is all James' fault and all opprobrium for such should be forwarded there.

However, had I not found such a generous and welcoming community on G+, I would have moved on to other interests.

3. Tell me about Taskboy Games, How did it start?

The word "Taskboy" has been around for, great Cthulhu, fifteen years or so. It is an umbrella term for all my projects. Originally, I had thought to make project management software under that title, which is clearly a nod to the Pipboy PDA of the computer RPG Fallout. However, my project did not pan out, but the domain name stayed.

All the wonderful adventures that were being self-published on RPGNow.com provoked me into thinking I could do the same. On the first release of Manse, the fiendishly talented Stuart Robertson provided the illustrations and I did the cartography and layout. Aaron Beck did a fantastic job of copy editing and even created a style guide for me. It was great fun!

To test the market, I released Manse for free and, to my surprise, people seemed to like it. I released a few one-page adventures (a concept I hope to return to later) which were also well received.

I did not have a master plan. I was just following my heart.

Editor's Note: You can find taskboy games - http://www.drivethrurpg.com/browse/pub/4333/Taskboy-Games

and http://games.taskboy.com/

4. Tell me about your latest release "Adventure Seed's - Islands"?

Adventure Seeds was originally written for Secret Santicore, to which I was very honored to contribute.

However, that year's Santicore ended up being a sprawling omnibus. It seemed like my article could be a nice supplemental for creating adventures, and so I released a modified version as such.

I hope to have a few more in the Adventure Seeds line this year.

5. What are you currently playing?

I am playing catch-up.

I owe Peter Spahn a short hexcrawl for the Valnwall guidebook (which already has a ton of excellent material in it from Pete and many others).

The tentative title of the adventure is Cragshaper's Errand, in which the party accepts what seems to be a boring caravan guarding gig, but finds it has larger political implications, much to their endangerment.

6. If you could campaign in any world which would it be?

Mystara. Although I despise the twee name, the locations of Glantri, Rockhome, Ylaruam and Ierendihold so much promise for fantasy adventure.

On the sci-fi side, the Star Frontiers setting of "the Wild West in space" is attractive.

I also would love to explore a Fallout-like or Thundarr-like world.

7. How is the writing going for The Horror Beneath Graywater Tower?

Gah.

I had that adventure about 80% written when I got blocked. I still think the bones are good. When I get the other stuff off my plate, I will return to it. As with many projects, I start out with a huge idea and then have to winnow it down to something I can actually execute that has strongly coherent.

One of the blocking items was that I wanted the dungeon to be in an extra-planar dimension between the Elemental Plane of Negative Energy and the Elemental Plane of Earth. Actually making that a gameable mechanic has proven challenging.

X2: The Castle Amber is one of my favorite old school modules (which is another thing James M. and I have in common). I suspect that Graywater will head in that direct a bit more.

From an income perspective, the next project I should work on is an expanded, printed version of Hexcrawl.

If nothing else, James Spahn keeps hounding me about it.

8. Tell me about the "Tranzar's Redoubt" & "The Manse on Murder Hill" Modules?

Tranzar's Redoubt is a small dungeon crawl in the classic tradition of a wizard's fun-house. Because of my fondness of Gygaxian naturalism, I try to have some level of plausibility to the encounters. You probably will never see a giant chess board puzzle in one of my adventures, for example.

With Tranzar, every room had to be an interesting place to visit. Not every encounter requires combat. There is a lot of treasure in the dungeon, but the best stuff is hard to find. I am reasonably proud of the Big Bad at the end of the module and I hope that I was modestly successful at subverting the well-worn trope of a wizard's lair.

Reading The Seclusium of Orphone of the Three Visions definitely affected the design of Tranzar, but I would excuse D. Vincent Baker if he did not notice.

Manse on Murder Hill is a "house crawl" in the tradition of The Sinister Secret of Salt Marsh. It is the first in a series (hey, I working in it!) that involves a revenge story. However, Manse is designed to work as a standalone module. It looks better than even with Tim Hartin's new maps and David Guyll's additional artwork.

9. What is one of your favorite adventures other than something that you've released?

A few of the classic TSR influences have already been mentioned, but let me throw out some love for the outstanding work that litters the OSR community like rats in a first level dungeon.

Peter Spahn of Small Niche Games just keeps cranking out solid, engaging adventures. If you only buy one of his products this year, let it be The Inn of Lost Heroes. That adventure goes to some pretty dark places for bog standard fantasy RPG.

On the subject of Spahn's, James Spahn's Barrel Rider Games is another publisher that is hard to go wrong with. Just pick up his White Box Omnibus and you will be transported back to the 80s. Maybe you are too busy playing his crazy-popular White Star supplement to bother, though.

At the risk of sounding sycophantic, your own work like The Lizardmen of Illzathatch is great resource to grab when you need a quick side adventure on short notice and do not have time for a lot of fiddly setup.

Kelvin Green's Forgive Us is a creepy little adventure for those seeking the claustrophobic atmosphere of something like the movie Alien.

For just ecstatic, punk rock fun, please take a look at Gus L.'s The Dread Machine. He should sell these adventures written in high school notebooks with ball-point pen. Great, raw fun.

Pretty much everything that the Hydra Collective puts out. The weird city setting of Fever-Dreaming in Marlinko is delightful and should be stolen from liberally (but I will admit to nothing).

Then there are the sort of monumental epics of OSR that I would hope everyone knows about: Greg Gillespie's Barrowmaze; Zak Smith's Red and Pleasant Land; and James

M.'s epic Dwimmermount. These giant works are inspirational in content and in form. I cannot say that I have fully digested any of them well enough yet. Dwimmermount in particular is a gift that keeps on giving. I would love to have been a player at James' table for that. Similarly, I would love to be at Zak's gaming table for pretty much anything.

I am really grateful that James Raggi is around. He is both a standard bearer for independent publishing, a champion of quality production and a challenge to the rest of us to be as creative as we can be.

There is an embarrassment of riches in the OSR community when it comes to worthy products. I am sorry I cannot now name all that ought to be.

10. Your modules contain some amazing art & layouts, who are these awesome artists?

Thank you for your kind words. I am very fond of the work that my team has done. It has far exceeded my expectations and I just sort of happen to get an impressive collection of talent to work for me.

Stuart Robertson came in for the first round of Manse artwork after I saw his stuff on G+. I am extremely proud that his art adorns my work.

Two or three years ago, Matt Hildebrand approached me looking for layout work. At the time, I did not have anything in the pipeline, but I keep a spreadsheet of OSR production resources and put him on it. Turns out, Matt is really, really good at layout, as many other OSR publishers are finding out.

During the production of Tranzar, I realized that the only way to get my products noticed in the highly competitive sea of self-published RPGs was "to go big" with design. My strategy continues to be to produce the best-looking products I can afford and cleverly sandwich my little stories in between.

The vision for a design aesthetic is stolen straight from Hellboy: high contrast and low resolution. The production should be clean, modernist and minimalist. The look should respect the past, but go someplace new. As much I as love the look of the old TSR modules, I wanted design that looked forward. I credit Zak Smith for challenging my thinking on what an OSR product could look like.

With these vague suppositions in mind, Matt came back with a few designs that were all excellent, but one spoke strongly to me.

I am over the moon with the look and feel of Taskboy's full adventure product line. Matt knocked it out of the park on Tranzar, so I asked him to modernize Manse too. I will use him for the Hexcrawl revision and anything else I do, provided he has the time.

Since Stuart was not available for the Tranzar work or the Manse update, David Guyll agreed to work those projects. Again, when I see an artist I like on G+, I put his or her name on my spreadsheet. David really nailed the visualization of the ideas in the Tranzar.

Cartography, although fun, is not my core competency, but it sure is of Dyson Logos and Tim Hartin. If I have to explain why these guys are leaders in OSR cartography, then you probably do not OSR much. I would love to get more of their work in future projects, but those two are really busy, as you might expect. Matt Jackson and Glynn Seal of Monkey Blood Design are on my list of talent that I need to work with.

The ingeniously bizarre illustrations of Jason Sholtis really send me. His stuff channels the weird fantasy of the 80s without nostalgia.

Look and feel is important, but content is king. Taskboy Games uses technical readers to find those parts of the adventure that do not work or are problematic. The readers I have gotten have all been wonderful, insightful and way more engaged than I could have expected.

Readers like Paul Go, Kyrinn Eis and Aaron McLin have all applied much needed hammering to my woolly manuscripts. Their work removed the most desultory parts and made the adventures so much more compelling.

Good production takes talent. If you do not have talent, you must buy it. Taskboy Games is a terrible business, but a rewarding hobby. While I understand the lower demand for print versions of these product, these adventures are stunning as printed things. They look just gorgeous.

11. When you get a chance to play a character, what type of PC do you like to play?

Clerics. I love them so darn much. They aren't as brittle as low-level magic-users. They wield some satisfyingly destructive weapons. They have spells that are immediately useful to the party at beginning levels and game-changingly dramatic at high levels.

They are the thinking man's dwarf.

12. What are you most excited about in the RPG scene currently?

Pete Spahn's Valnwall guidebook will help draw interest back to Labyrinth Lord. Obviously, I am a fan of the LL system. It feels so open (thanks to Dan Proctor) that it demands community contributions. Without changing any core rules, there is a whole universe of adventures that can and should be produced to make the world of LL as rich as that of Mystara.

Editors note: AMEN!

And that, thanks to the OGL, is a playground for all of us.

As I mentioned, the Hydra Collective appears to building some kind of monster. The Hill Cantons just gets bigger and better and nuttier. They seemed to be have a good time.

Every day, my G+ timeline has new and inspiring illustrations that fire off more adventure ideas than I can capture. Sometimes, I have to shut off G+ just to get work done or to prevent me getting overwhelmed and depressed. Ignorance of the competition really seems to help get work out the door.

OSR is such a creative juggernaut and I am positive that I only see about a tenth of it.

As the careful reader will notice, I do not keep up mainstream RPGs from established publishers. Although there is a lot of good work there, it just feels like a walled garden to me.

13. I really loved "How to Hexcrawl". It's an amazing resource, where did that come from?

I am happy you found it useful. I have gotten a lot of encouraging feedback about it.

The origin story of Hexcrawl is pretty mundane. I saw the term hexcrawl but could not articulate how to play one. That seemed to be the case for a lot of people.

My Hexcrawl supplement is an attempt to explain what a hexcrawl is, how it is different from a dungeon crawl and how to actually play a hexcrawl as envisioned in the B/X and LL rules. It is a clarification of rules which do seem to contradict themselves at times.

It is interesting that one to the complaints about Hexcrawl is that it does not contain new information about wilderness adventuring. That as a complement.

One last shoutout to James M. At some point, James articulated this guideline: D&D is always right. What that provocative motto is expressing is that a good chunk of the original D&D rule set was thought-out and extensively play tested. One should try to understand and play the rules as they are written before creating house rules that may end up being problematic. This is not an injunction against

house rules, but a gentle nudge to try the game as designed first.

By collecting wilderness adventure rules into a single place and ordering the rules in a more procedural way, I hope I have made DMs who shied away from running a hexcrawl feel confident that they could do it successfully.

David Cook provided the rules for wilderness adventures in the original TSR D&D Expert Rulebook and he wrote X1: The Isle of Dread, which tries to be an exemplar of those rules. The problem is, X1 is a sort of masters class in hexcrawling which does not actually follow the rules in the Expert Rulebook. It is not easily approachable. Sure, wondering on the island is not too bad, but getting to the place is a little rough, due to the waterborne travel. The revision to Hexcrawl will cover water travel and attempt to make it a clear (and hopefully fun) procedure to follow.

One last thing of note about Hexcrawl. Hexcrawl was going to be a G+ post in the LL group. It would be something of limited value and relatively short. After getting twenty pages into the project, it clearly needed to be something more permanent than either a blog post or a social media status update. In an open forum, I asked the LL group members to comment on and review the manuscript I produced. Since the editing was done in a collaborative spirit, I did not feel that I could charge for the final product. Dyson Logos very generously provided the footer to that doc, which was a pleasant surprise.

Hexcrawl is my small gift to the community and that version will always be freely available (although tips are welcome).

The revision I am planning will have the same high production values as my adventures, which means that I will be charging money for it. It will be available as PDF and in softcover.

14. Football Or baseball? And bonus question Star Wars or Star Trek?

I do not sport.

The second question is easier: Star Trek.

Let me explain.

I like Star Wars. I was born in 1971 and I am legally obligated to enjoy this wonderful hero's journey that George Lucas produced.

While Star Wars gets high marks for escapism, it fails to capture my imagination. I do not care about any of the worlds shown in the seven movies (although the battle wreckage seen on Jakku was evocative and a great allusion to the last rebellion). I do not find the Jedi more interesting than, say, samurai. Why the Sith limit themselves to only two members seems like a retconned rationalization that makes little strategic sense. The penchant for deathstars is darn near pathological. Cool spaceships though. If you want lightsabers, may I suggest the work of Jack Kirby on Thundarr?

On the other hand, Star Trek is a setting I want to explore, even with clunker shows like Voyager and Enterprise spraying excrement on the continuity. The core optimism of Trek is that somehow humans will work together to explore the stars rather than conquer them.

Star Wars speaks to the child I was. Star Trek speaks to the adult I am.

15. What are the plans for Taskboy Games this year? Anything in the works?

One way or another, the Valnwall hexcrawl will be delivered.

Jason Paul McCartan's zine, OSR Quarterly, should be emitted this year and contain my article about the Wild Hunt and related critters.

The Hexcrawl revision should be next, both because it is straight-forward and high profile.

Another unfinished supplement kicking about has the working title "Mr. Xang's Shop of Exquisite Grotesqueries," which will be fun to write and require outré illustrations (which seems like a rather good fit for Jason).

Also, Richard Littler's darkly absurdist Discovering Scarfolk keeps asking to be recast as an adventure.

There are half a dozen adventures in an unfinished state on my Google Drive, with probably another six ideas for articles or supplements. Keep watching my G+ posts to get a better handle on what next will be emitted from TG.

The main blocker is free time. The reality is that the priority for this hobby comes after work and family obligations. In October of 2015, I was lucky enough to join a new company that has been fabulous to work for. However, I have not adjusted to the new schedule quite yet. When I do, I expect to have more bandwidth for orcs and such.

Editor's note: Thank you very much for taking the time to answer my questions Joe Johnston I appreciate it!

You can find Taskboy games -

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http://www.drivethrurpg.com/browse/pub/4333/Taskboy-Games

and http://games.taskboy.com/

About The Author

Shane started out playing Fighting Fantasy (TM) books when he was 13. Around the same time he played his first game of D&D (TM) with his cousin. Later he started writing his own adventures for the Advanced Fighting Fantasy game (TM) and played many hilarious adventures with his friends.

Fast forward a few years later, a snowy Christmas morning in Canada, he opened up his first present to find that he was given copies of all the main books for AD&D 2nd Edition (TM). As he got older he found less time to play games and read books and took a few years of sabbatical from all things RPG. (Insert sad face).

As of last year he was asked by his cousin in law to teach him how to play D&D (TM) and his love affair was re-born! Having never really spent much time on Google +, he decided to check it out and found this HUGE community of these apparent "gronards" that played this game called OSR. What the heck is that? Check it out on Google + it's an amazing community of likeminded RPG-er's (is that a word?) that really dig the early version of the "World's Most Popular Role Playing Game" (TM). Shane found all these cool clones of the original set of rules and fell in love with RPG`s all over again! (Do yourself a favor if you don't know about the OSR go on and google it).

Somewhere in the last few months, Shane decided "Hey I should try and write an adventure! And maybe put it up on this site called Drivethrurpg (TM) , "Caverns Of Ugard" was born. Check it out on drivethrurpg.com it's free.

Shane's brain is currently smoking with ideas for a huge module, tentatively called "The Enormity Project", hopefully he will get that thing finished up by the end of the year.

Check out www.3toadstools.blogspot.ca to read Shane's daily rambling about RPG's

Shane is a recording engineer at a studio and plays rhythm guitar with a local band called "One Blue Door". He has yet to figure out what the reference is behind the name "One Blue Door" but they do play some cool tunes! Check em out if your into "Prairie Rock"
www.facebook.com/onebluedoor

If you haven`t guessed that I`m a goofball yet, please see above picture.

Cheers! And keep those dice rolling!