

YOTTA NEWS SPECIAL EDITION



Welcome to the Yotta News post-convention edition! Our agents were out in force to help bring you all the information we could to make you feel as if you'd been there yourself (minus the travel, crowds, long lines and dwindling bank accounts). Unfortunately, with nearly 9,000 events scheduled, we may have missed a few things. In this issue you'll hear about new and future game releases and get a couple of eyewitness accounts from the "showroom floor". We'll meet and greet a few vendors and take a look at what's on the horizon for the gaming industry. Let's get started....

This was the 43rd year for Gen Con and, for the first time, attendance broke the 30,000 barrier! All the major players were there including Wizards of the Coast, Fantasy Flight Games, Paizo, Mayfair Games, etc. The "little guy" was represented too as we saw Evil Hat, Indie Press Revolution and Pelgrane Press, to name a few, as well as some of our local friends. Up-and-coming game developers, authors and artists had their own piece of the action also.

When we visited the Fantasy Flight Games booth on Friday, we were greeted by Bryan Bornmueller (Senior Sales Manager) and he talked to us about how successful the show had been for them thus far. Lines to purchase their games had been so long on Thursday that it caused a few problems with the flow of traffic in the aisles. Some of FFG's best sellers were *City of Thieves*, *Dust Tactics*, and *Dungeon Quest*. Their video coverage of the



show is also quite excellent. Check it out on the web at: <http://www.fantasyflightgames.com>

We talked with Matthew Grau, a developer with INFRNO. They are a hybrid of a Social Network and Virtual Tabletop web site. This is something that has been gaining some interest the past couple of years. Matthew explained that their focus is to Find (a gaming group or game), Connect (create a character and join-in) and Play (via their virtual tabletop interface). Their site is still in the Beta phase and through the end of the year you can join up for free. Afterwards they're looking at a monthly membership of about \$5.00. You can find them at <http://infrno.net> Look for an article about Virtual Tabletop gaming later in this issue.



At the MANTIC miniatures booth, Jim Kitchen was not really allowed to give out too much information. He said he couldn't tell us that they have a new 8 page rules set for their miniatures coming in October. He couldn't say anything about how, with these simple, straight forward rules, they were going for a more "beer and pretzel feel" designed for fun. He couldn't tell us that this would be available on their website as a free download or that they were written by Elexia Calvatori. What he could tell us was that they had a new line of Zombie miniatures coming out in late September that will be "the best ever". <http://www.manticgames.com>



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Four Hours at Gen Con

(The Following is best read in the voice of a 40's film noir detective)

I picked up my passengers and grabbed a donut at 8AM. Traffic was light on Interstate 74 to Indianapolis. A wrong exit put me 15 minutes behind schedule and I had to park somewhere just shy of the center of the Earth. A short hike later, we were badged and ready for the exhibit hall by 10:20. I thought I might catch the presentation "I'm Wil Wheaton, and I'm a Gamer" but the line was crazy long. Sorry, Wil, maybe next time.



Back at the exhibit hall things were starting to pick up. The costumed attendees sporting the standard backpack survival gear with bags of dice, rulebooks and the smuggled-in Mountain Dew were gathering around the various vendor booths. You could smell the money smoldering in their pockets.

That's when I spotted Matt. He'd ditched the others and was ready to do a sweep of the room when he decided to bring me along for photo support. We talked to vendors, drank orange root beer, took pictures, drank more orange root beer, Root Jack I think it was. With Vitamin C. Sold by Pirates who claimed it would "fight scurvy".



Stopping by Exile Game Studio's *Hollow Earth Expedition* booth, I asked about the long delayed Mars book. "Not Yet, but soon" was the response. They directed me to check out *All For One* by Triple Ace Games. It uses their Ubiquity rules system and it's Musketeers vs. Monsters in 17th Century France. I didn't know what to say to that, except "Thanks".

Next, we came upon the Nexus Games booth. Typically distributed by Fantasy Flight, they had 3 soon-to-be-released board games with demonstrations going on. *Magestorm*, *Dakota* and *Letters From Whitechapel* all look excellent. I'll keep an eye out for them this fall.



Moving on, we came across a booth that I recognized by the merchandise as Margaret Weis Productions and I said as much to Matt. Then I looked up. Margaret Weis was standing there smiling at me. We asked for a picture, which she graciously allowed us to take, and she asked Matt if he was part of the preferred retailer program. She directed us to her business manager and we proceeded to get more information.

After this encounter we picked up the pace. We went past the White Wolf booth but something was wrong. No merchandise or demonstrations. Their booth could only be

described as a "Goth Lounge". The only sign of a game tie-in was a banner with the words *The Grand Masquerade*, September 23-26. We puzzled over this but kept going.



We visited the booths for Mayfair Games, Fantasy Flight, Privateer Press, Wizards of the Coast and Paizo among many others. Matt greeted several acquaintances along the way and introduced me. I just kept smiling and taking pictures.

Finally, we reached the end. Independent game developers, authors and artists inhabited this area. From what we could see, there is potential for many good things on the horizon. Suddenly, a growl sounded nearby. We looked around but could not find its source. Then I realized it was my stomach. It was 2PM and I hadn't had anything but that single donut and orange root beer all day. We rallied the troops and made our way to a local diner where we swapped stories of our encounters. Once we were finished, we launched the expedition to find my car and head back. It was 3PM and I had a 5:30 deadline to meet....



See you next year Gen Con.

-Mike



Four Days at Gen Con

(The Following is best read using the normal voices in your head)

When it comes to Gen Con, there are two lines of approach. One doctrine declares that you should fill your schedule with as many activities as possible so as to eliminate the 'What do we do now?' problem. Note that this is not usually a question of there being nothing to do, but too much to do - and a well thought-out itinerary can be invaluable.

The other approach is that you show up to the convention with little or nothing planned, the assumption being that with so much to do you'll stumble onto plenty of fun stuff no matter what you do.

I tend to fall somewhere in the middle. While jumping in with both feet is a great way to do Gen Con, it's also good to plan ahead and make sure you don't miss something you might later wish you'd attended.

The center of attraction at Gen Con is, of course, the dealer's



floor where you can check out offerings from every publisher in the game industry. The big draws this year were the *Dark Sun* campaign setting for *Dungeons and Dragons 4e*, *The Dresden Files* RPG from Evil Hat, and Fantasy Flight's *Deathwatch*, the long-awaited 40k space marine RPG. Each of these drew big crowds and were brisk sellers.



Jared Sorensen and Luke Crane

Independent gaming continues to grow, as was evidenced by the buzz of activity at various indie game booths (Indie Press Revolution and Pelgrane Press were notable) as well as the well-received Games On Demand gaming tables at the Crowne Plaza several blocks from the convention center. Two notable indie releases this year were Robert Bohl's *Misspent Youth*, and my favorite con purchase, Jared Sorensen and Luke Crane's new transhuman sci-fi game *Freemarket*.

The best gaming experience I had all weekend was Danielle Lewon's *Kagematsu*, a small press RPG with an interesting central concept - a wandering samurai named Kagematsu stumbles upon a small village besieged by an evil force. The

male players all portray female villagers trying to secure Kagematsu's protection while the female player (should one be present) plays Kagematsu. *Kagematsu* won a well-deserved Indie Game of the Year award at the convention, and is well worth checking out.



One noticeable difference this year was a complete and total lack of video games - a sharp contrast from the last few conventions, which hosted elaborate displays from some of the biggest video game companies in the business.

If the lack of videogames was disappointing, their absence was mitigated by the appearance of Felicia Day, Wil Wheaton, and the cast of *The Guild*. Aside from signing autographs and mingling with fans, Ms. Day and her co-stars premiered *The Guild* Season 3 and spent most of their off-time enjoying the convention.



THE EYE OF ARGON

Jim Theis

I attended more panel discussions than usual this year, including Jared Sorensen and Luke Crane's 'Game Design is Mind Control', a thoroughly entertaining look at game mechanics and theory. I also sat in on a reading of the legendary novella 'The Eye of Argon' - if you don't know what that is, make your way to Wikipedia and find out for yourself. It defies description. The 'winner', if you can call him that, performed his reading with a pitch-perfect impersonation of Christopher Walken. Believe me - you've not experienced 'The Eye of Argon' until you've heard the Walken version.



Wil Wheaton & Felicia Day

Four days sounds like a lot of time to spend at a convention but departing from Indianapolis on Sunday evening after the con always leaves me with the feeling that I could have done more - but I suppose that's the definition of a good convention.

-Alex 'Musashi' Mayo
<http://yellow-menace.com>

Gaming Without Boundaries The Age of Virtual Tabletop

I remarked to a friend of mine some time ago that our generation of gamers is the first to pass the hobby on to our children. Excepting the people who founded the industry (Gary Gygax, Dave Arneson, et al.) - we are first generation gamers. Naturally this means we're getting a little long in the tooth.

Children, career demands, and everything else that comes with being a 'grownup' (just typing the word sends a chill up my spine) saps our roleplaying time, and that's assuming you're even in the same geographical location. As you get older, your social circle tends to drift apart. The gaming group you shared in high school or college can often end up on opposite sides of the globe.

Ten years ago, this would have meant leaving the hobby. With the advent of communications tech like the internet, however, tabletop games have made the transition to virtual spaces. An entire industry built around bringing gamers together online has sprung up in the wake of the internet, making it possible to game with friends anywhere on Earth. The most popular of these applications is Fantasy Grounds, a virtual gaming space built around an exceptionally slick interface that integrates rulesets

from many popular games including Dungeons and Dragons 3.5 and 4e, Call of Cthulhu, and Savage Worlds. A full features list is too detailed to include here, but you can visit the official Fantasy Grounds site at www.fantasygrounds.com to see if it fits your needs. One drawback: Fantasy Grounds isn't cheap. The basic license - required to play via FG - is \$23.95, while a GM-compatible full license is \$39.95. Considering that everyone who wants to join a game needs the basic license, plus one GM license for the game master - you can see where that gets a little pricey.

Fantasy Grounds

Virtual Tabletop for Pen & Paper Role-Playing Games

The good news is that if you don't have that kind of disposable income (like me...) there are free alternatives.



While it doesn't have all the bells and whistles of Fantasy Grounds, RPtools suite of free java-based software gets the job done. You can find these at www.rptools.net.

While both of these options are third-party applications, it should be mentioned that game publishing companies themselves are beginning to shift their focus towards online tabletop gaming. The most (in)famous example is

Wizards of the Coast's abortive virtual tabletop experiment. Originally slated to launch alongside WotC's Character Builder and GM tools, the virtual game space proved to be too much for Wizards' development team to handle and it was eventually sidelined.

One virtual gamespace application which made its' presence known at Gen Con this past weekend was INFRNO, a combo social networking application and virtual tabletop which tries to harness the power of Facebook and apply it to the gaming community. I haven't used it to game yet, but it looks like a nice way to network with gamers in your area. On the downside, it's yet another public profile I'll have to maintain in addition to Twitter, Facebook, my blog, my LinkedIn profile - well, you get the picture. INFRNO isn't just about playing the game - it's also about building an online identity and meeting gamers. It's neat, but might be outside the scope of someone with an existing gaming group that simply wants a tool to game via the internet.



Of course, if you're into indie / story games - many of which rely on very few physical 'props', you can probably get away with using Skype, the ubiquitous VOIP (Voice Over IP) application...it's completely free and works really well for running narrative-style games. Skype even has built-in webcam functionality, so if you really need to pass visual info, it's capable of doing that as well.

I've only barely scratched the surface of virtual tabletop gaming. There are loads and loads of existing applications to connect you with remote members of your gaming group, and more hit the internet every day. As long as you have access to the internet, distance never has to be a barrier to good gaming.

I can't help you with the time zones, however.

-Alex 'Musashi' Mayo
<http://yellow-menace.com>



Tastes great! Less scurvy! Root Jack orange root beer. The choice of pirates that don't like a bottle of rum. It's a local Indianapolis company trying to make it big. We

may have to try to smuggle some across the Indiana – Ohio boarder.

<http://www.rootjack.com>

You have to take the bad with the good. *Eoris* is a new RPG out of France. The core (and supposedly only) rulebook is a whopping \$99.95! They had no flyers or sample books. Just



some guys that said it was great. You can go to the website and check it out. The artwork and music are impressive but some more substance is needed if they're going to sell in this market. A release date is set for December but they better do more than tease everyone with pretty pictures before then. <http://eorisessence.com>

None other than Margaret Weis was at the Margeret Weis Productions booth showing off the new releases for the *Smallville Roleplaying Game* and *Leverage*. The *Smallville* game is co-



Joseph Blomquist

authored by local talents, Joseph and Mary Blomquist who we got to see while there. Other licensed RPG's carried by MWP are *Supernatural*, *Serenity* and *Battlestar Galactica*. Most of these titles utilize the award winning *Cortex System* rules set.

<http://www.margaretweis.com>

Out Of The Box Publishing were running demonstrations of their new releases, *Pirate Versus Pirate* and *10 Days In The Americas*. OTB is known for their award winning line of family friendly games.

<http://www.otb-games.com>



Running by the authors and artists area, we stopped by to talk to Tracy Chowdhury about her book series, *The Chronicles of Shandahar*. Tracy is based out of Cincinnati and writes the series with co-author, T.M. Crim.

<http://www.worldofshandahar.com>



And, of course, over at the Paizo booth they were selling the new *Pathfinder Advanced Players Guide* like crazy. Paizo has done a great job with this system and is really giving *D&D 4E* a run for its money.

<http://paizo.com>

So there you have it. The sights, the sounds, the smells.... All covered here in one small publication. We hope to have more adventures at next year's Gen Con...



"...I'm serious, best zombie EVER!"