

Issue 1

EPOCHIAN TALES: DEMON IN THE DEPTHS FICTION BY OTTO TOMS

Excavator Monthly™

Official magazine for The Mutant Epoch™ milieu

TME Role Playing Game • Fiction • Art

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• LIQUID FLESH
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William
McAusland
NM



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Official magazine for **The Mutant Epoch** milieu

TME Role Playing Game • Fiction • Art

Issue 1

Publisher: Outland Arts™

www.mutantepoch.com

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ISBN 978-0-9782585-4-2

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Front Cover: 'Spiderborg', Mixed media by William McAusland

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Last Round

As the inaugural issue of Excavator Monthly, there are no past issues to refer to, no cover image to include, no highlights or concerns to address. In future issues, however, we will give a quick look over our shoulder to see what was covered last time around. The main purpose for this feature is merely to let readers know what they missed last time if they didn't pick up their copy.

Next Round

This section briefly showcases what's coming up in next month's issue.

In Issue 2, we have an article called 'Regarding Solo Play Gaming' in the GM's Bunker section, the 'Gambler System' for PC Generation Vat, while under the Player's Perspective section we have an article on 'Your Stash', describing how players can stow away unused, inferior, or power and ammo depleted devices for later use. Also in issue 2 we showcase some new creatures; the Bloat Creeper, Pipe Worm, and the Moulder, some more NPCs and a few handy relics not found in the Hub Rules, namely the Remote Watcher and the impressive Semi-Automatic Sniper rifle.



Cover of EM issue 2

From HQ

Welcome adventurer! This is the first issue of Outland Arts' entirely The Mutant Epoch focused magazine, Excavator Monthly. We hope you find this magazine to be both entertaining and useful, enhancing your role-playing game experience with a wealth of ideas, artwork, adventure plot ideas, alternate rules, news about what's related to the post apocalyptic genre, new creatures and relics, non-player characters, encounter segments, mini-adventures, and even some fiction. We have high hopes for this publication, and a heap of upcoming articles and art ready for forth coming issues.

While Outland Arts has numerous TME (The Mutant Epoch) products in production, this monthly is perhaps the first exposure many readers will have to our company and the game. We understand that many post-apocalyptic genre gamers will be fans of other RPGs and might not have even heard of the Outland System, the game mechanic used in The Mutant Epoch RPG, as well as a fantasy RPG in the works which uses the same rules mechanic. Given this, we wanted to make sure that this magazine contained a wealth of information and gaming goodness for those who play a wide range of PA RPGs, and while the statistics for creatures, relics, NPCs and assorted articles use the Outland System, a cunning game master could easily adopt much of this to his or her own system.

We plan to release 12 issues of this magazine and depending on the response to it, and our work load on source books, adventures and other TME related merchandise, decide whether to continue the publication or not. Reader feedback, therefore, will be closely monitored as we want to provide the best content possible for players and game masters alike, and a monthly magazine may or may not be the what TME fans need most.

Please, let us know what you think of Excavator Monthly, what you would like to see, what questions you may have, if you have any art you would like to add to our coming fan art section, or are interested in advertising with us. You can also sign up for the free company newsletter, **Outland Arts Insider** also a monthly publication, by going to the web site at www.mutantepoch.com or www.outlandarts.com.

As this is the first issue, some explanation of each section seems warranted; therefore, following the heading for some departments you will see a short descriptive text outlining the general purpose of the section, *in italic text*. This will be discontinued after this inaugural issue.

In closing, thank you for your interest in The Mutant Epoch and Outland Arts, happy gaming and we hope you enjoy this issue as much as we did creating it.

Sincerely,
Will McAusland
Creator



Incoming

In this section we will post letters from gamers or others interested in the post apocalyptic or science fiction genre, as well as rules questions. At times, we may post comments or queries here that also appear on the web site's Frequently Asked Questions sections or forum, along with questions posed in person by gamers, people at bookstores and comic shops, even non-gamers who are curious or even baffled about role playing games or The Mutant Epoch setting.

If you have a comment or question, email us at info@outlandarts.com with the words 'for Incoming' in the subject line. You don't need to use your full name or address, and we won't make your personal information available nor add you to a list unless you want to sign up for Outland Arts Insider, our newsletter. We promise.

Media Chatter

This section of the magazine showcases various media events, cool or useful web sites, other games, miniatures, books, movies, and whatnot, even old content that needs a second look, and whatever else we find that somehow applies to the game, setting or theme of The mutant Epoch. We also take a look at scientific, technological, military, biological, social or environmental occurrences in the news and media. From these observations, we hope to highlight elements of our real world which seem to be leading to a post apocalyptic era, as well as cool gadgets, gizmos, high-tech weapons and earth changes.

We at Outland Arts hope that some of what we uncover will serve to alert you to very real threats to our way of life, as well as to point out the beneficial advances which will prolong or hopefully ensure that The Mutant Epoch remains Science-Fantasy, and not fact.

Blogs

Green Skeleton Gaming Guild <http://greenskeletongamingguild.blogspot.com/>

Our friend Brutorz Bill, who is a regular at our forum and a huge supporter of The Mutant Epoch, has a very active and entertaining gaming blog called the Green Skeleton Gaming Guild. He covers all sorts of games, in various genres. We highly recommend stopping by; tell 'em *Mutant Lord* sent yeah.

The Geek Gazette: <http://thegeekgazette.blogspot.com/>
The geek gazette is another excellent gaming blog which also covers a wealth of other geeky goodness, covering such topics as comics, movies, computer games, tech, and conventions. We really appreciate the support, links and articles they did on The Mutant Epoch over the years.

Podcasts

In future issues, we will simply make note of newly discovered podcasts, but for now, we will include a list of ones a tabletop RPG enthusiast will most certainly enjoy.

Before we get to that list, let us explain what a podcast is for those of you who don't know.

A podcast is basically a radio show that you download and listen to on your computer. You absolutely don't need to have an ipod or other mp3 player to listen to them. Podcasts can be downloaded individually from various podcast directory sites, like www.podcastalley.com, www.podcastpickle.com, and itunes.com to name only a few of the larger ones. Most people, however, have their assorted podcasts downloaded automatically into iTunes so they don't need to go looking for the shows.

For busy people, with irregular or active schedules, listening to traditional radio is hit or miss, simply because if you don't happen to be able to listen to the radio broadcast when its on the air, you've missed it, and if you get an important phone call during a show, again, you've missed a section of the show. With podcasts, you can listen to all or only a part of a show when you are good and ready, plus, you can save them to listen to again later, you can fast forward through ads or topics you haven't much interest in, plus, you can simply pause the show if you get interrupted, or rewind the show a few minutes to catch something a second time, like a web URL or other important detail.

There are plenty of great tabletop RPG podcasts out there, perhaps more than even the most avid gamer can listen to. For the most part, no two RPG podcasts are the same, and as a show evolves, they soon become spe-

cialized, or at least develop a flavor and mood of their own if not directly focusing on a specific aspect of the hobby. Some podcasts are clearly more prone to Indie RPGs, while others stick closer to the generic d20/ODL lines, and some mix RPGs with board games. For the most part, all have knowledgeable hosts and guests, and from time to time present interviews with RPG industry professionals, fiction writers and artists.

The following are a few we at Outland Arts highly recommend:

Suggested RPG podcasts

Fear The Boot <http://www.feartheboot.com>

All Games Considered <http://www.agcpodcast.info>

RPG Countdown rpgnow's top 10 <http://rpgcountdown.com>

Warpig Radio <http://www.warpigradio.com>

The Voice of the Revolution podcast for Indie Press revolution <http://thevoiceoftherevolution.com>

Other Podcasts we recommend

Noisemakers 1/72nd wargaming <http://www.noisemaker.libsyn.com/>

Dan Carlin's Hardcore History <http://www.dancarlin.com/disp.php/hharchive>

We have plans for our own TME focused podcast, and will announce its arrival in this magazine and on our web site. Happy listening, roll some dice and keep your head down.



Product Preview

This section of the mag will only appear if we have a new TME book ready for sale in the next month or two. We'll show readers a preview of the interior and cover artwork, overview of the contents, anticipated price, page count, where its going to be available to purchase and links to any online sneak peeks. We've put a large number of supplements and adventures into production over the last few years, play testing them in conjunction with each other and timing their release dates in a specific order to supply our supporters with a solid base of resources, inspiration and related entertainment. In this issue, we have a major announcement, showcasing our first community setting....

Pitford: Gateway to the Ruins

This 188 page source book will be coming out in PDF and print within about two months of this issue of EM, as it contains 111 illustrations, not including maps, which are presently being sketched and inked.



Pitford is an enclosed digger support community, resembling a junk plated dome, supported by concrete slabs and the ruins of a few ancient structures. It is inhabited by humans, mutants, beastial humans, cyborgs, synthetic humans and others, all coexisting in the protective shell of this barter fort on the edge of the Great Ruins. Pitford is one of three communities which make up the Northern Freehold, along with the solar power station of Array and the great, sprawling, slum enclosed city of Overpass. The NF, or Northern Freehold, is situated in The Crossroads Region, an area along the Pacific Ocean over part of the former megalopolis of Greater Los Angeles.

Of course, Many game masters who have downloaded the free Pitford Lite book from the Society of Excavator's member's only area of The Mutant Epoch website, have placed Pitford in other parts of the North America and renamed it. Likewise, while

there are statistics for some encountered NPCs or items found in the book, game masters running other post-apocalyptic RPGs could easily adopt Pitford to their own system of choice with almost no tweaking required.



Preliminary pencil art for Pitford Source book.

The book contains listings for all businesses, streets, community facilities, defensive positions and tiers, as well as a local rumor table, adventure hooks, and memorable encounters tables for saloons, streets, basement passages, the topside deck, camping outside the gates at night, and specific locations as well as tables for local weather and much more.

Several upcoming adventures take place in and around Pitford, as does some TME fiction, making it a great place to start your next The Mutant Epoch adventure session. See a preview online at <http://www.outlandarts.com/TME-pitford-art.htm>

Summary: Release date early fall 2011, 188 pages, 111 illustrations and 5 maps, PDF price \$9.99, Print Price \$ \$24.99



GM's Bunker

This section will be present in every issue of the magazine, and will often have more than one article or idea for encouraging great role-playing among your players. As the heading implies, the topics are mainly for Game Masters, but are not rules heavy or secrets to be concealed from your players.

Game Master Rewarded Bonus Experience Factors

Experience factors are often gained through the participation and survival of combat events; however, there are many ways for a character to gain ranks without constant fighting, and in the Outland System, the attainment of experience factors is achievable through being cunning, diplomatic, daring, or whenever the player conducts his or her character in a remarkable, unexpected or skillful way.

Great role-playing sessions are best had when the players challenge themselves to think in creative ways, as well as conduct their characters boldly, with earnest efforts at narrative or acting, thinking outside the box, and pushing their characters to respond to their surroundings, circumstances, or adversaries in new and entertaining ways. Likewise, the Game Master encourages the players to assert themselves in the game world by rewarding the player characters (PCs) with vital information, food, water, relic rewards, or, if no item is had from some bold act which boosts everybody's enjoyment of the game, then a modest, openly given bonus in experience factors can be handed out by the GM.

This EF bonus is not so much to reward the character for bravery, as this can soon lead to suicidal levels of risk taking, but rather to improve the gaming experience for everybody at the table. Additionally, recognizing skillful role-playing can foster player involvement in the game allow veteran role players to show new gamers that they are not passively being led

through the GM's adventure by the nose, that their character has real power to make things happen in the game world. In some respects, great role playing clarifies to everybody that they are not merely watching some story unfold like a person watching a movie or reading a book, but rather, their character is actually *alive* in game terms, at least within the bounds of the setting and rules. While one's character might be shown as a bunch of numbers and words on a sheet, the data on that sheet is merely a representation of a dynamic and growing personage, and that all those numbers, weapons, mutations, implants and skills are very real powers in game terms. Indeed, a character is not static, his or her traits, gear and abilities are not fixed, that the entity a gamer controls can improve in prowess and skill, become more tangible, develop, acquire new articles and better his or her odds of survival in future game sessions through experience factors and the advancement of rank.

In many popular role-playing games, including computer RPGs, the advancement of the character is essential for maintaining player enthusiasm, investment, concern and value for the PC's well being. The very act of going up in rank serves as both a reward for playing well and being lucky, but also represents the growing toughness, fitness, luck, learning and evolution of the individual. A character who survives time and again, learns from each event and adapts to his or her environment is better able to step up to greater challenges, due both to superior personal growth, but so too, by the acquisition of relics, allies and other resources which make the entity far more potent and robust in the brutal world of the Mutant Epoch. While gaining ranks is a goal, it is not the main goal of a character, furthermore, the attainment of higher rank is not so much a carrot before the player's nose but rather to build identification and fondness for that character by its controlling player. A character which has undergone and survived numerous adventures becomes increasingly real to a player, just as a character in a book does as chapter after chapter the reader observes the character's undertakings and the audience becomes attached to the hero and begins to actually care what happens



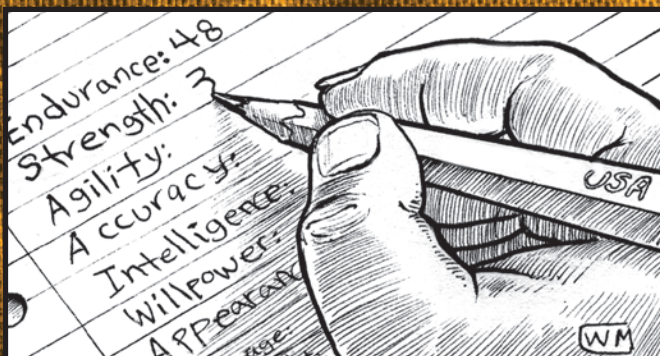
to the character. An emotional investment occurs through the continued play of a character that is fit enough to survive beyond first rank. A character who has earned an emotional investment is one that deserves the player's attention and concern, not only because of all the hours spent playing that character, but because there is clearly something about the character which has allowed him or her to survive where other characters did not. Often one character is better than another from the start, perhaps he or she simply had better traits, better gear, superior implants, skills or mutations, or, more likely at low rank, the PC was simply lucky, that a bullet or poisoned arrow hit another person instead of him or her, that the character stepped over a trip wire that a much more powerful PC in line instead snagged, unleashing a waiting trap, killing him, and so forth.

Experience factors are rewarded by three methods, first by the total rightfully earned by acquiring 1/10th the value in silver coins worth of loot brought back to the character's home or base camp, through adventure (instead of through commerce or wages, etc.), and the second method by the experience factors value listed for adversaries conquered during game play. Conquering does not mean killing, necessarily, for to capture a being also brings about the gain of its EFs or Experience factors, while driving off a creature either yields half its EF value if the GM wishes it, otherwise none. The third way to gain experience factors is for the GM to arbitrarily reward them to either the whole group or to one or two exceptionally well conducted characters who either did most of the risk taking in the past adventure session, or the player played the character in such a way as to make that PC stand out, or advance the game session to make it more enjoyable for all. This last reason is essential for making The Mutant Epoch or any role playing game a success, and keeping the table top RPG hobby alive, flourishing and certain of its place as an entertainment form for future generations. Cooperative storytelling, talked about so much in this and other articles which support this game system, as well as elsewhere in RPG discussions, articles and forums, is really what role playing games are all about, getting together with friends and having an alter ego participate in a mutually assumed reality. By giving out d20, d100 or even set values of 50, 100, or more experience factors to a particular character, what the GM is saying to the whole players is, "Immerse yourself in the adventure, the setting, and the genre of the game, play well, act well, do stuff you can't or wouldn't do in your normal life. As the GM you want to encourage your players to do stuff that is heroic and wild, perform deeds with gusto and boldness which inspire fellow gamers to really dive into the game session, get behind their character and for a few hours at least, be somebody else, assume a role, and be the characters in the sort of a great book or movie you wish they would make, the sort of entertainment that is designed for you specifically, a form which is quite unlike anything else out there, where you, the player, acting through a generated entity or sorts, becomes the hero in a story that is potentially unending, without a set script, in a world and age where anything could happen, where the outcome of events and fate of hard pressed humanity is often up to the actions of an individual character.



PC Generation Vat

Each issue will have a new optional character generation system, which at the Game Master's discretion, can be used by players to establish new PCs, adding diversity to both the game mechanic and the sorts of individuals players will roll up. Some of these systems are very brief, while others require lengthy explanations, so too; some can randomly produce quite exceptional characters purely by chance, while others demand careful trait value allotment. As with most RPGs, character generation is almost a game unto itself, and many hobbyists enjoy creating their gaming personas, non-player-characters or back-up excavators for the sheer fun of it.



Double Barrel System

This simple character generation system means lots of dice rolling, and immerses players immediately into a sort of mini-game. There is nothing complicated here, just roll twice for each trait and keep the better score... that's it.

Player's Perspective

As the title implies, this portion of every issue will be dedicated to the players involved in a TME gaming session and will offer a wide range of resources, ideas, character design and enhancement tools, as well as ways to be a better player for the enjoyment of everybody at the table. Some of the articles we have in the works are also provided to allow you to flesh out and personalize your characters by either suggesting or randomly determining such things as motivations and goals, phobias, personalities and possible religious beliefs. In addition, there will be articles on how to conduct your character so as to improve the odds of his or her survival or mission success, as well as a feature on establishing just how the characters in the excavation team met each other, and what common bonds and motivations compel them to work together even after accomplishing their first mission as a group. In this issue we have an article on the how and why a gamer would use multiple player characters.

