

ISSUE 8

THE

the-ancible.com

Ancible

Your portal to Sci-Fi and Fantasy Gaming

INSIDE

Gruntz

Critical Mass

Microworld
6mm Gaming

Heavy Gear Blitz

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THE Ancible



View from the Command Deck

In the spirit of sharing, here is some news. I would like to say a big hello and welcome to Ancible towers, to all the new readers. Last issue we tripled our readership so I'm guessing that we are doing something right or did I offer to give away free money? Either way, we are all very excited that we are getting the numbers up.

A number of suggestions have come into the office about the next issues and I am please to say that this issue, Issue 8, has a theme. In case you missed it, this one is all about small scale war gaming, but more about that later. Why start with this one, you might ask? Well we had to start somewhere and I decided that it was going to be here.

The wargaming industry seems to be going through a bit of a renaissance. Every week we discover someone with a new idea launching games, figures and scenery, as well as some of the more established companies making massive range refreshes or new launches. As a result it gets increasingly more difficult to choose what content to put in the magazine, new stuff or some of the more established games. It is always a tricky balance. We have also discovered the hybrid board games/war games like Tanhauser and Claustrophobia, which use miniatures and boards. When we get a couple of moments free, we shall of course bring you some information. Not really surprising that when we have to let off some steam in the office, there is nothing we like better than to get out the Munchkin cards for a bit of ritual humiliation. Come to think on it, it's usually me who gets ganged up on.

The second thing I would like to share is that The Ancible is going to be adding something new into the mix. A sort of expansion, though more like an enhancement. I can't say much more at the moment, but it is very exciting and will probably be happening in April. . .no not April 1st. As the time gets closer, there will be more info on the forum. (I keep trying to get you guys to come join in, so this is this issue's attempt)

I offer up Issue 8 for you delectation and consumption.

Our aim is to introduce YOU to the games you don't yet know

Kenny R

Magazine Team

Managing Director – Kenny Robb

Kenny@the-ancible.com

Production Editor – Christine Carter

Subscriptions and Merchandising – Simon Parkinson

simon@the-ancible.com

Snr Review Writer – Jez Fairclough

jez@the-ancible.com

Snr Staff Writer – Ian Cook

ianc@the-ancible.com

Snr Staff Writer – Ian Barstow

ianb@the-ancible.com

Contributors

Robin Fitton, Oscar Fitton, Alan Oliver, Pat Ohta and Spencer D Taylor

Article Submissions

The team welcomes ideas for articles and in the first instance you should contact Kenny Robb (kenny@the-ancible.com) for some handy hints on submission. Please note that while every care is taken with your submitted material we cannot be held responsible for any loss or damage that may occur.

Artwork Submissions

Are you a budding artist or are you already established? You should contact Ian Barstow (ianb@the-ancible.com). We will take every care with any work you send us but unfortunately we cannot be held responsible for any loss or damage that may occur.

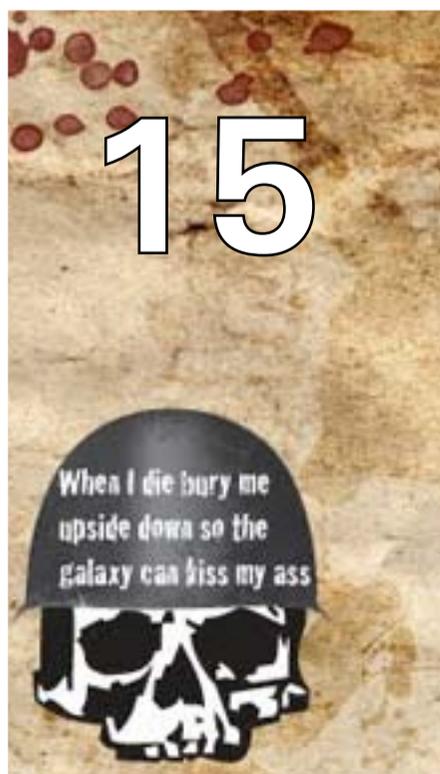
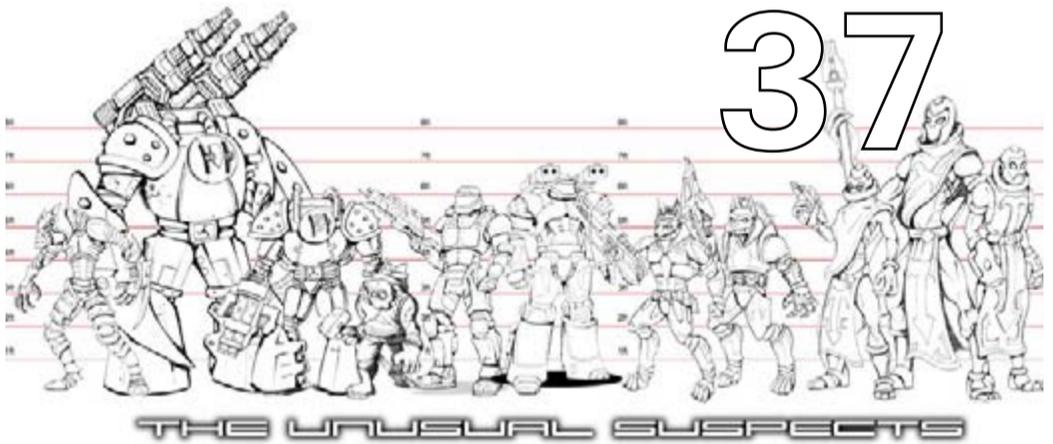
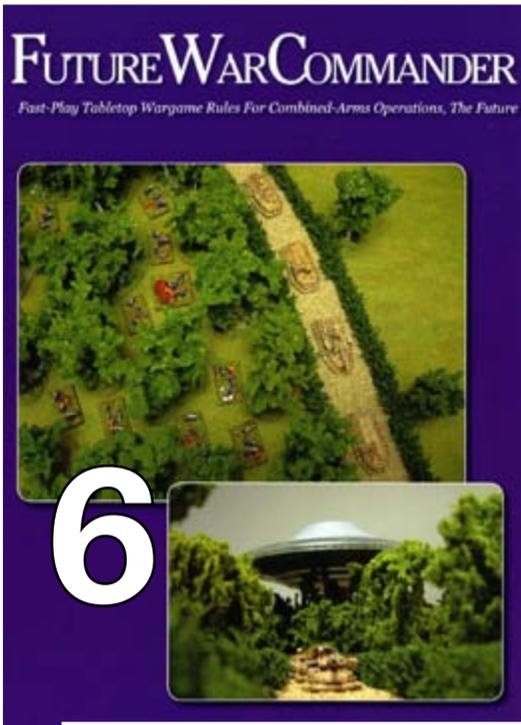
Reviews

Manufacturers and publishers are invited to send in samples of their products for our team to review in the magazine.

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Contents





PULL UP A SANDBAG

WITH
UNCLE BOMBER

6mm

There I was sitting quietly, contemplating my Eden figures, quietly wondering what happened to large scale 28mm battles at my club, when Kenny mentioned that he was picking up a few armies, nothing new here I thought, he's always managing to get his sweaty sausage like fingers on new figures and rules.

It was his next announcement that grabbed my attention. I'm going to dedicate an entire issue of the Ancible to large scale games. Now I have to admit that this caused my pulse to quicken. I had visions of huge armies marching across green flocked battlefields, ranks of archers raining death and destruction on the enemy, or maybe whole squadrons of armour charging into the teeth of the opposition's guns.

It was after he saw the faraway look in my eyes that he dropped the other shoe. I am going to do an issue on 6mm and 15mm games. At first I was delighted, I still had a vision of armies marching across the tabletop, you could still have squadrons of armour zooming everywhere. I became lost in the warm glow of excitement that had enveloped all of us at the club.

Then it hit me, 6MM figures, has anyone tried to paint 6MM figures lately. I am not saying that I am old, and my eyes aren't what they were, but a few of the cheekier members of our select group have asked me what it was like at Mafeking, and did I really fly against the Red Baron. That aside, I do find painting 6MM, and 15MM figures to be a bit of a challenge, I do see lots of very pink faces and indistinct uniforms in my future.

It was while I was travelling home after another exciting evening rolling dice, enjoying classical FM, and wondering if maybe that 3rd piece of cake was maybe one piece to many, who was I kidding of course it wasn't. It was during this journey that I started to see the hand of my nemesis and old enemy Old Father Time, that or Kenny has a very strange sense of humour.

Normally Old Father Time will attack the gamer directly, shopping trips with our partners, long car journeys on hot summer days with bored children, you know what I mean. In this case though, the scale of figures will be smaller, but I know it will feel like forever to paint them.

Or maybe he has allies in his war on the gamer; maybe we are seeing a new and insidious theatre of operations. Fellow gamers he is declaring war on the older gamer, he has been attacking us unsuccessfully for decades, and he now sees an opportunity to finish us off. I know that my blood pressure will increase when I try and make out features on those tiny figures. I can see it now, legions of gamers will be found hiding under painting tables, clutching their smallest paint brush and muttering over and over again "I used to be able to put faces on these".

Others will be found sat naked in the middle of the room, surrounded by their 28mm figures, muttering under their breath "I'll never leave you again" while gently rocking back and forth.

I am not sure what we can do about this fellow grey gamers, I for one will be doing the only thing I can, the only thing that any of us of a certain age can do. Yes! We will have to start to use younger gamers; we will have to start using, it pains me to say it, use painting services. But don't think of this as selling out, it is certainly not about being lazy. It's about using our initiative, about using the opportunities made available to us. We are going to have to let somebody else do the painting for us. And why not! We have worked hard all these years haven't we; we've served our time behind the magnifying glass. So don't feel guilty, stand proud, and shout to the sky. You lose again Old Father Time, you lose again.

Feel free to disagree with me, as always you will be wrong.

If you have any comments you would like to make or if you have a subject that you feel Uncle Bomber should tackle then please send your emails to unclebomber@the-ancible.com

Uncle Bomber

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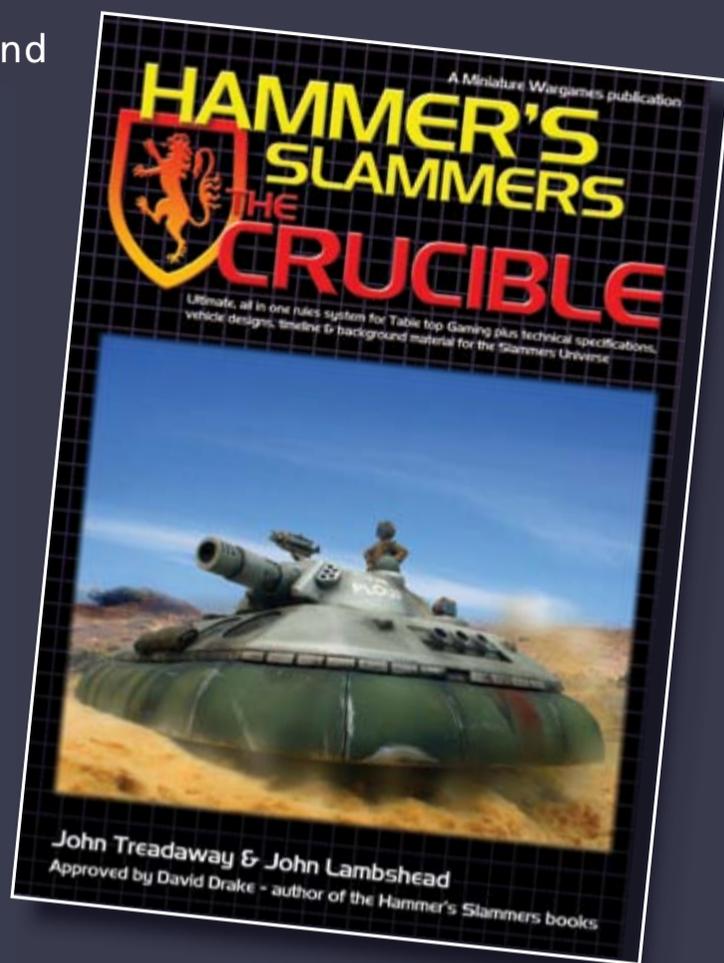
Neil Shuck, The Meeples & Miniatures podcast.

"The rules are simple in a good way. The painting guide is excellent. This system deserves to have a good following; it has the advantage of a fully rounded universe with interesting concepts and a pretty slick set of rules. They tick a lot of boxes for me."

Pete Stedman, Wargames Recon



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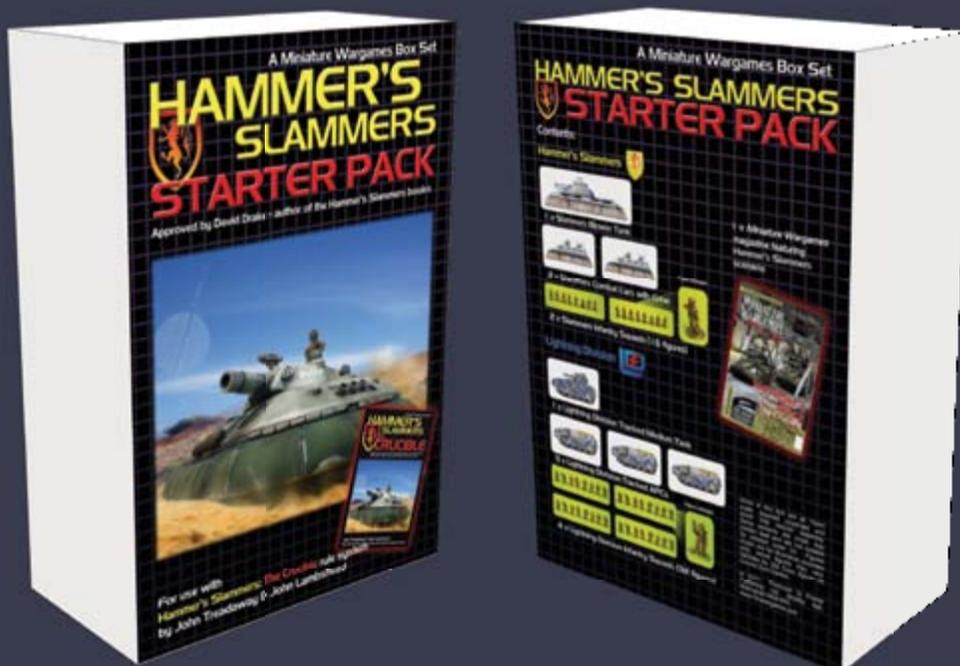
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WARFARE

The Future of

FUTURE WAR COMMANDER

An Introduction to Future War Commander by Alan Oliver

I Just thought I would write a quick note about the Future war commander article. The more observant amongst you will notice that it is the same article that appeared in issue 1 and normally I wouldn't include something that had been published previously however in this case I feel that it fits into the general theme and helps to give a fuller picture of the rulesets and options available to the small scale wargamer.

Kenny

Future War Commander (FWC) is a fast-paced tabletop wargame that provides rules for fighting battles with an assortment of different figure ranges. Not only does the single rulebook cover dozens of different armies of commercially available figures, but it also includes rules for creating your own units and putting points values to them.

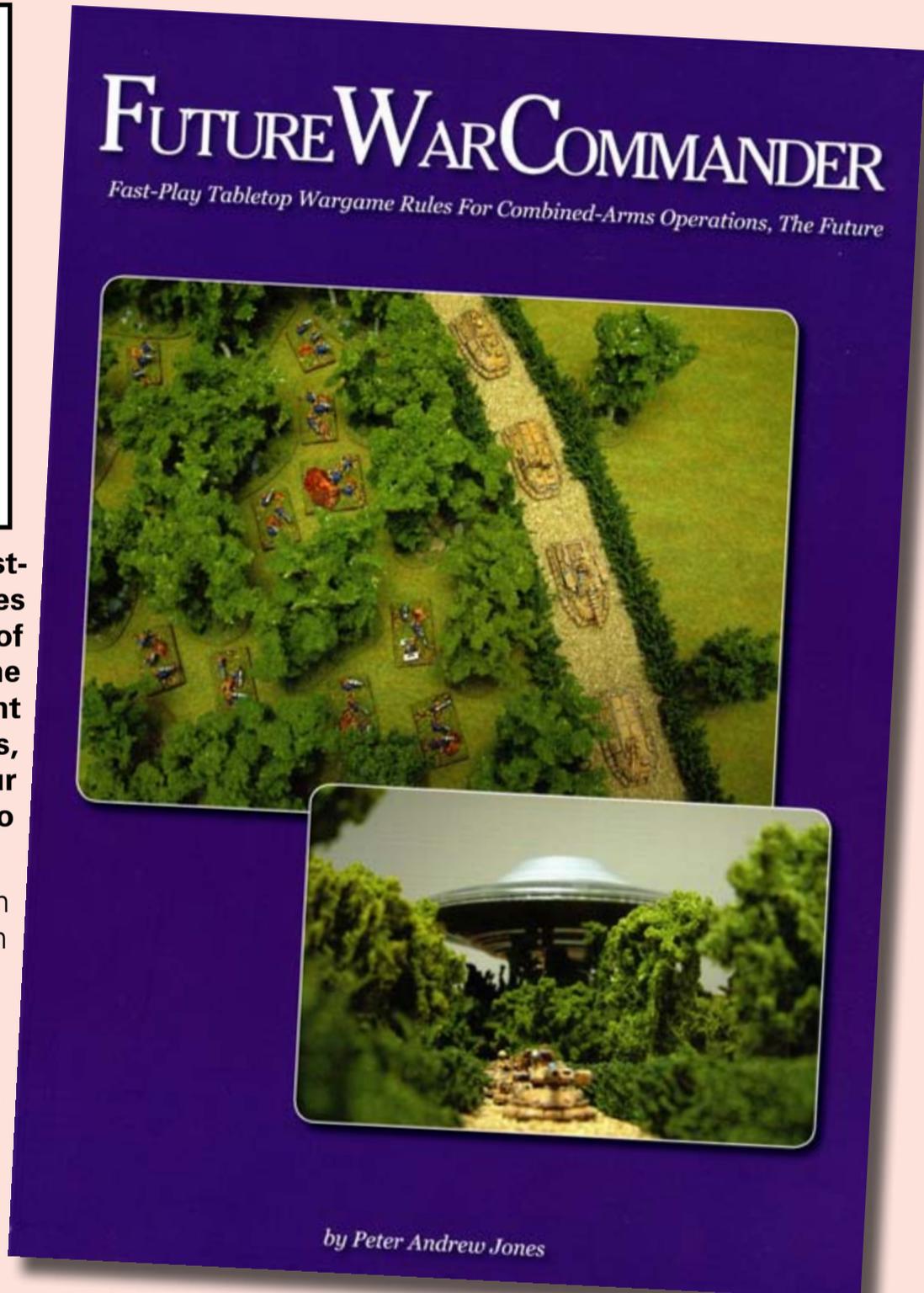
I'll look at the game mechanics first, and then discuss what makes the game so much fun to play.

The Game Mechanics

The whole game system is designed to produce a fast play game style that isn't going to get too bogged down in rules questions and debates, excessive record keeping or long and involved decisions.

Deployment

Often overlooked, deployment in any wargame is very important. There are several options in FWC for how to deploy forces. Static deployment is the classic wargame approach, deploying forces on opposite sides of the table. However there are rules for mobile deployment, where forces enter onto the table as an action. This has the advantage that the troops involved cannot be attacked till they have acted. There are also rules for deploying via teleportation, tunnelling vehicles, dropships, etc. Everything you would expect from a Sci-Fi wargame in fact.



Turn Sequence

The game uses alternating player turns, with the active player moving and attacking while the defending player does little except wait for a target of opportunity. If the active player moves units in front of the enemy, they will get shot at. A kill is unlikely, but due to the clever damage system it may be possible to keep them out of action for the current turn, disrupting the active player's plans.

Orders

In most wargames units will perform a set amount of activity during a turn, typically moving a certain distance and firing their weapons once. But FWC is not like the others. Command units must successfully issue orders to units to get them to do anything in a turn. This can leave units sitting doing nothing for a turn if the dice roll badly. However because a successful command unit can keep issuing orders to the troops under its command, you can get sudden bursts of activity. A tank column might cross the entire battlefield to threaten the enemy's rear or a



dug-in infantry company might blast away at the oncoming alien horde and vaporise them all.

Under a single order most units can either move their standard distance, or fire once. Deploying troops from any kind of transport requires an order. Stabilised units are particularly useful, as they can fire and move under the same order. Artillery spotters can call in barrages on enemy positions, air controllers can call in airstrikes and troops that can teleport can redeploy from one end of the battlefield to the other. All assuming you make that vital command roll.

Movement

Movement is simple. Each unit has a stat listing how far it can move and what sort of movement it is. Units can move in any direction and end up facing in whatever direction they wish. The movement type determines how the unit interacts with terrain.

It is the order system that makes movement interesting, as you cannot predict how far the enemy are going to move with any accuracy. It can range from nothing to four or even six times their movement stat, depending on how the dice roll. The same is true of your own troops of course, as you cannot rely on them getting to where you want them to be when you need them there.

Firing and Damage

Again this is done from a single stat, which determines the range of the unit's weapon, and how many attacks it brings to bear. The chance to hit is based on the cover that the target is in. This can be modified by some weapons and protective systems, but for most situations it is very straight forward. Damage inflicted from these attacks is then saved by armour, determined by the stats of the target unit. If the attack has done more damage than the target has capacity to absorb, then the unit is destroyed. Different units can take different amounts of damage, determined on their stat lines again.

If insufficient damage is done to kill the target, then the attacker gets to try and suppress it instead. Suppression is a major factor in the game, at least against some armies. A suppressed unit can neither move nor fire, and is vulnerable to further fire from the enemy and assault.

One of the most significant points is that damage doesn't carry over from one turn to the next. If a target is not destroyed during this round's firing, it will be back to full strength next turn. This not only removes record keeping almost completely, but also creates interesting tactical choices. Do you concentrate fire to kill a few units or spread fire around to suppress many, knowing that the damage done will disappear next turn.

Artillery and Air Support

Both of these are off-map assets that are called in by specialist command units. Both work on an area of effect, applying their attacks to all units within that area. This fire zone is centred on the enemy unit that they targeted, however in most situations there is a chance for the fire zone to scatter off target. The greater the range between the command unit and the target, and the lower the tech level of the army, the further the fire zone is likely to scatter.

Artillery can either cover a large area with a small amount of fire, or concentrate on a smaller area but with more firepower. Air strikes either hit a small area hard, or a single target very hard. Because of the different types of attacks they are useful against different targets.

Artillery is most effective against infantry caught in the open. A heavy artillery barrage against a company of infantry caught moving across open ground could easily kill them all. Artillery is less useful against tanks of any sort or infantry who are inside buildings or fortifications. Artillery is also difficult to stop, although not impossible. Artillery units can counter-battery fire against enemy artillery; although the chances of actually destroying an artillery piece are



relatively low, it may suppress them for a turn. The only other way to stop artillery is to kill the artillery spotters that call it in.

Air strikes are as effective against infantry as artillery, although they hit a smaller fire zone. They will also have difficulty hitting infantry in buildings or fortifications. They are much more effective against armour than artillery, and a pin-point attack against a tank can often destroy even an undamaged heavy vehicle. However air strikes are easier to stop. Firstly, you can kill the command unit that calls them in, just like killing artillery spotters. Secondly, air superiority can drive off or destroy the attacking aircraft before they even get to the battlefield. Thirdly, anti-aircraft units on the table itself get to fire at aircraft performing an air strike anywhere within their range. This will, if it hits, either destroy the aircraft or weaken its attack.

Some aircraft can hang around on the battlefield, either after performing an air strike or deployed on the table from the start. Dropships can deploy troops to any part of the battlefield, and then hang around to provide cover, while gunships cruise above the battlefield raining death on enemy units from above. Most ground units don't have the weaponry to target dropships and gunships, so these units are difficult for the enemy to kill once they are in play, it is only AA units and commanders who have weapons capable of hitting them.

Then you have orbital bombardment. This cannot be stopped at all, there is nothing that the enemy can do about it other than hope the order roll fails. However orbital bombardment is expensive. Instead of buying the supporting unit, you have to pay for each individual shot when selecting your army. An orbital barrage is cheaper than the artillery or aircraft that could provide that many attacks, the difference being that artillery will fire practically every turn, and airstrikes will happen most turns, while the orbital barrage is one shot.

Victory and Morale

Battles do not go on until there's nothing left – most of the time. Armies have a breaking point beyond which they will no longer fight. For most this is determined by the casualties taken. Once casualties reach a certain level the morale of the army starts to break. A good commander might hold the army together for another turn or two, depending on their command rolls, but the end is certainly near.

In a simple battle victory is based on breaking the enemy formation while not being broken yourself. However there are a number of scenarios in the rules that set different victory conditions, and the rules are flexible enough for you to create your own scenarios and victory conditions easily.

Why Play Future War Commander?

Three main reasons come to mind. First, there is the Fog of War element to the game, second is the fast pace of play, and third, the game's flexibility.

As to how FWC has come about. It is the third game produced by Specialist Military Publishing, following on from Blitzkrieg Commander that covered World War II, and Cold War Commander that covered from then on to the present day. This effectively makes FWC a third edition of the game, with plenty of development and feedback from the players. The rules have been polished till they shine.

Fog of War

This is mainly brought about by the orders system. At first this may seem like the biggest drawback of the game and a source of endless frustration. In other wargames you can always rely on your units to do what they are told, but in FWC there isn't that certainty. And yes, it can be frustrating when the dice are against you and half your forces sit and do nothing while the enemy stomps all over you. However this is a good thing, as it makes the nature of the game less competitive and more narrative in nature.

The game becomes less about winning and more about the unfolding story of the battle itself. Why have your crack troops spent half the battle hunkered down in that building, what have they found in there that is so interesting? Was it because you've failed to successfully issue an order to them for three turns, or have they found a hidden store of vital military intelligence? Why have your artillery units suffered from weapon misfires for the last couple of turns? Was it because you've rolled command blunders twice in a row, or was it because enemy saboteurs have gotten to your ammo supplies?

Fog of War also takes the pressure off, and means you can just relax and enjoy playing the game to see

what happens, rather than pushing so hard for victory that neither your opponent nor yourself gets any fun out of it. Those players who are only interested in winning may not take to the game. The unreliability of their troops making it impossible for them to achieve the success they crave. But they should still give it a try. Some of the most competitive gamers I know took to the game precisely because it wasn't competitive and so they could take their hunger for victory off the hook for once.

The order system can work the other way as well. Sometimes the luck is with you and a formation will race off across the map, blasting away at the enemy as they go and completely turning the course of the battle. This potential to do something impressive is inherent in every unit in the game, which means that every unit remains important. Three stands of infantry may not seem like much. But at the right time and place, and with a good set of order rolls, they can do far more than anyone would expect.

Fast Play

The game is quick to learn and quick to play. The mechanics of the game are simple to grasp and use and most of the units in the game are covered by a single line of stats, sometimes with a few additional notes. This makes it easier to keep in mind the capabilities of troops which makes playing the game easier.

The game requires virtually no record keeping, with damage being marked on the table by dice, using different coloured dice to indicate suppression. As such there's no need for huge amounts of paperwork cluttering the table, wasted hours spent leafing through record sheets or anything of that nature.

Also because there is less pressure on the players to win, due to the whole fog of war factor, players will typically not spend ages over tactical decisions. Instead there is generally more of a 'get stuck in and see what happens' approach to playing the game.

Flexibility

For me personally this is the final nail in the coffin for all other game systems. FWC not only covers a large number of figure manufacturers in the rule book, but with the unit generation system you can stat up any forces of the appropriate scale and use them against anything else. Most of us have old epic armies sitting in the loft, and this is a chance to dig them out and use them again, which is good in its own right. But it doesn't stop there. As now you can put the Imperial guard against a force of Battletech mechs, or have a duel of the ancients between the Eldar and Kraytonian armies. Or how about putting together a zombie horde and using them against space marines, Battletech mechs,

even Ogrethulhu. Everything is compatible, within reason. Using 15mm and 6mm scale armies against each other could be done, but would look more than a little odd. But who's to say that one army isn't a race of giants?

Then you have the force construction rules. Each unit has a points value, and while there are some restrictions as to the number of certain units that you can field, these limits are not generally that intrusive. For example power marines, aka GW Terminators, cost 240 points each, and the limit is a maximum of four per thousand points. Not going to be difficult keeping to that limit. The point is that you can build your battlegroup pretty much however you want it. Either going for full strength companies of infantry and squadrons of tanks, or a more ragged and chaotic veteran force, with units under strength and unusual assets attached.

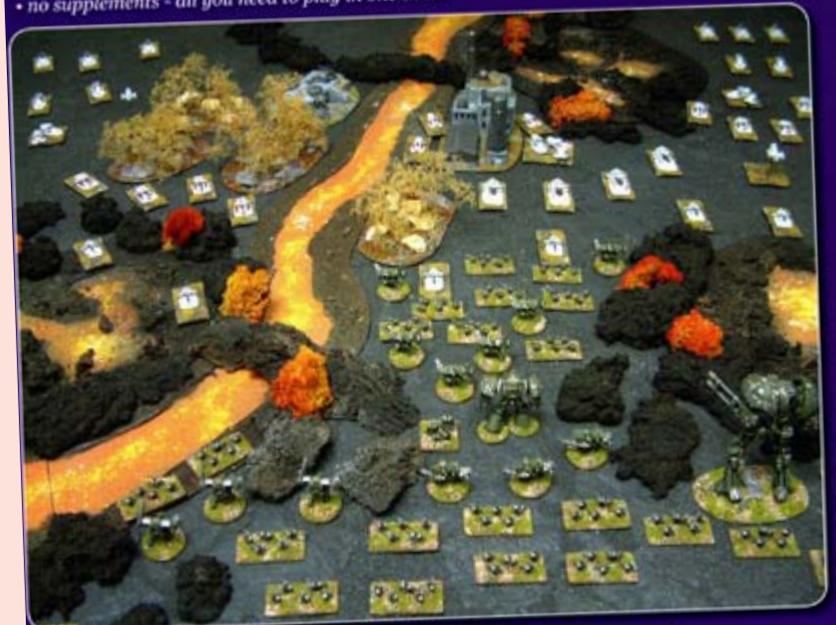
And Finally

The last and possibly best thing about FWC is the man who's brought it into being. Peter Andrew Jones has not only produced an excellent series of games, but he is also a nice guy. There is a forum on the website www.futurewar-commander.com where he regularly answers rules questions. Not only that but there is other useful information on the website including alternative army lists, rules suggestions, tactical discussions and everything else you would want to support a thriving wargame.

using miniatures on a tabletop. Command anything from a platoon right up to a division and get a result in 2-3 hours without becoming bogged-down in detail. Suitable for any scale miniatures from 6mm right up to 28mm and no re-basing is required.

The main features of the game include:

- command system that emphasizes the fog-of-war in a simple but effective manner
- the same mechanism for casualty resolution throughout
- rules for future technology, including shields, plasma weapons and cryonic weapons
- examples of play using colour pictures of miniatures "in-action" to illustrate the game
- minimal set-up time - simply assemble your forces and play
- unique points system that allows for unequal forces but an equal chance of victory
- 41 well presented army lists covering the miniatures from 15 different manufacturers
- 11 scenarios for simulating combined-arms warfare of the future
- suitable for solo, two-player & multi-player games at home, at the club, or in the garden!
- no supplements - all you need to play in one book



Includes comprehensive Army Lists for the following manufacturers:

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~ www.futurewar-commander.com ~

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SO? WHATS IT ALL ABOUT?

Robin Fitton in Conversation with Kenny Robb

KR: How did you get introduced to wargaming?

RF: A friend at school had parents that ran a craft shop in Crawley, West Sussex. They had some Prince August molds for sale and between us we managed to cast them up into smooth looking blobs, paint them with Humbrol enamels and use them in an ad-hoc made up game on the floor. It was at this time we also discovered Citadel miniatures but we did not use them for wargames initially, we just painted the miniatures and used them in I.C.E Middle Earth Roleplaying games.

KR: How long have you been wargaming?

RF: 26 years give or take a few Months.

KR: What made you create GruntZ?

RF: I have collected 15mm SCI-FI since the days of Traveler boxed sets and started collecting again in around 2000. I am a "big" small scale fan and have many 6mm scale models, so anything small and interesting looking I will normally snap up like a magpie.

I also spent a lot of money and time building a 15mm building terrain layout and wanted a system that would be fun to play on it.

After building up enough 15mm metal to cast a coffin for myself I had yet to find a game that I could setup quickly and really enjoy after multiple plays. I had no commercial motivation; I just sat down in July and started writing ideas out in a sketch pad, initially for a mech focused game which quickly became focused on 15mm. I was basically writing the game for myself as a small project.

KR: What were you doing before you started creating GruntZ?

RF: I was going through a period of focusing mostly on 28mm games at the local Crawley club including Warmachine, Hordes and Pulp City. I was also still enjoying lots of different games like Aeronex, Full Thrust, Future War Commander in 6mm and Hordes of the Things in 15mm.

My very last project before Grunts was painting and



preparation for a Future War Commander army in 6mm. I had been experimenting with command bases which are now unfinished in my cabinet.

KR: Where did the idea for the game come from?

RF: There are various influences and triggers which spawned the idea for Gruntz and they mostly originate from a desire to want to play out scenarios from various novels I have read over the years.

I wrote a set of background material for a roleplaying setting I named Icarus, which I had used briefly in 2008 with the Savage Worlds roleplaying system. I managed to write around 30 pages of background and information about technology which was influenced by fiction like Iain [M] Banks Culture novels (Consider Phlebas, Player of Games and Look to Windward) and non culture novel The Algebraist. The strongest influence was probably the Gap cycle novels by Stephen Donaldson which is brutally hard on its characters. Nights Dawn Trilogy, Commonwealth Saga and Void trilogy by Peter F. Hamilton are also influences on how I game and the sort of scenarios and give me ideas for the sort of stories I want to portray on the gaming table.

Having these background story ideas gave me something to build my rules thoughts around.

KR: What does GruntZ have that other games systems don't have?

RF: It is quick to learn and quick to play with ranges and movement designed specifically for 15mm.

Gruntz is not tied to one manufacturer with good support across the 15mm miniature manufacturing community. You can build your own custom units based on a points system, use some of the pre-published statistics or simply ignore the points and play out scenarios of your own design. This allows players to field a balanced force based on the points, or throw the points system out in favor of playing scenarios which are either story based or random battles.

I wanted to create a core gaming mechanic in Gruntz which was flexible enough to allow me to bolt on advanced rule tweaks of my own or from the community. The profile based cards and damage resolution remains the same at the core, however you can add in different activation and card based turn sequences which are detailed in an options section of the rules. I built a game system I wanted to play with friends at my local club and with my 11 year old son. It was then tweaked based on feedback from players at wargames shows, on the internet group and at local games with friends. Gruntz is flexible enough to adapt to different tastes but still remains true to a core set of mechanics based on sound probability.

It uses a 2D6 roll for most areas of the game which is less random than multiple single dice. This might

not seem like much of a unique selling point but I have played several games recently that use the original multiple single D6 scores or multiple types of different dice (D6, D8, D10). I don't think the probability is working very well when you roll one dice which makes the games a little too random for my taste. I always think about board game classics like Settlers of Catan when I consider probability and the way they built the probability into the 2D6 resource roll is an inspiration.

KR: Whenever you are not working on GruntZ what else do you get up to?

RF: I have a young family, so I spend time with them on our bicycles. I like walking in the Lake District or around the South East. I also have a busy job as an IT Manager, so I try to keep up to date with IT trends, especially in Travel web sites which has been my sector for the last 10 years. I am very keen Apple Mac user and early in my career (early 90's) had training as a "desktop publisher" to create brochures for a technology company. So designing the Gruntz rule book is also a bit of hobby and allows me to use my design skills for a fun project.



I love wargaming for the creativity and the way terrain and models can look, so any other spare time is taken up with design projects like this 28mm terrain for Warmachine.

I also have a Youtube channel where I put together





painting guides and after action reports for various different game systems including Gruntz. Here is a guide to painting 15mm Powered armour: <http://www.youtube.com/user/trybeinganihilist#p/u/11/RVyvo-JSSA8>

KR: Where and when would people be able to get a demo?

RF: If anyone is interested in a local club demo I am in "tour mode" this year, so I am happy to drive around the country to setup a demo game. I am also attending wargames shows, so I should be at all the main events in the South East like Salute, Warfare, Colours and SELWG.

How do you make sure that the new models fit in and aren't too powerful?

I am hoping that the points system is balanced enough to allow for more powerful units but at a points cost

that makes it difficult to field many of them and overwhelm the battlefield. You can also just ignore the points system if you like to play a scenario focused game, in which case a powerful model might be a fun because you can see how the game plays out with an unbalanced force.

KR: Do you have any models on your desk at work?

RF: I have a small 1:90th scale 1971 air cooled Porsche 911 by Schuco Piccolo. It is a German company that make solid metal scale models which are spot on for 15mm scale wargaming.

KR: What was the last book you read?

RF: Rework, by Jason Fried. It is a book about changing your approach to work and business. Not very relevant to wargaming but it did provide me with an approach on how to use my time well on Gruntz development.

KR: What's on your iPod?

RF: 30 years of compulsive addiction to music collection. Ranging from baroque early music, to folk, through to punk. It is mostly obscure music like last year I started listening to film scores like Tigon films "Blood on Satans Claws" soundtrack. When I drive my gaming friends to wargames shows they fear the musical experience they have to face in the car, it usually leaves them scarred for life.

KR: What other games designers do you admire?

RF: Jon Tuffley, Richard Garfield and Klaus Teuber

KR: Do you have a gaming room at home?

RF: I have a cold untidy Gaming garage with a table tennis table hidden beneath a cloth and a hobby room for painting, spraying and storing my miniature collection.



Microworldgames.com

Nothing is better for a reviewer than when someone contacts you for a review. It's great as they are always going to be full of information they want to share, and sometimes they can be the best reviews.

I haven't dabbled with anything smaller than 20mm in a long while. It takes me back to the days of playing HOTT (Hordes of the Things), when I could read a rule book in 5 minutes and probably paint the army in ten considering my amazing skill. And when I knew we were doing a small scale issue, I actually went and dug them out to remember how small they are.

When Steve from Microworld games (<http://www.microworldgames.com/>) contacted me about doing a review I had a good look around the site to see what I could be getting myself into. Sometimes I'm not the best person for something as no wargamer covers every genre or game style. What I saw greatly impressed me. The 6mm range of both fantasy and Sci-Fi that Steve produces is in one word amazing.

So after a few chats with Steve we decided that the Fantasy range would be a good place to start, and then when the Sci-Fi Range was slightly expanded we could take a look at them. I waited for the Postman to make the delivery, and to be honest considering I've had issues with the postal service, it didn't take long to get here, and the price that Steve charges his customers is great (\$4 anywhere in the world.) At that price it's easy to see why anyone would purchase them. Seeing miniatures on a website does not convey the full feeling you get when they are in your grubby mitts.

Steve was very kind and pretty much sent me everything from the range so I could get a good grasp of everything; and it's all very well done. The fact that people can sculpt at such small scale and get a great level of detail is a real testament to how talented these people are.

Let's look at each range and I can froth about the bits I like.

Beastmen

Back in the day when I was a serious player of a very popular 25mm Fantasy scale battle game (you know the one), I use to have a Beastmen army. The look of fur sometimes struggled to be found at 25/28mm, so doing it at 6mm and having it look good is great. The detail on things like the Giantaur faces is astounding,



and a good painter is going to make those bestial mouths really look the part. The standard troops also have great detail and the only thing anyone could ask for is maybe some variance, but that's being purely picky on my part.

Orcs

You can't beat Orcs for having some great additions to their armies in any game. They always have something a little extra to them. It's not just a great horde; it's a green horde with character. Steve has captured this idea with things like the Lesser/Armoured Behemoth with fighting compartments and Orcs with spears. Even the line troops have a great feral feel to them.



Undead

Simply amazing is the fine detail on the Bone Dragon, and Skeletal Mammoth is fantastic with hardly any flash at all, which showed a good QA system is in place and

that care was taken. I can imagine sat painting a huge horde of these up to take over the battlefield without any worry at all. Additions like



the Wight's add real flare and character to the army.



Vikings

Come on who can resist an army of Berserk Huscals? Beyond the normal troops and Berserkers Steve has also expanded the army to include Frost and Hill giants, something often mentioned in Irish tales and old Nordic. It adds a nice little flair to the force. Plus there are mounted Valkyries... you have to be dead

Woodland Realm

Normally most games will sub divide these people into different armies, but Steve hasn't. Not that you couldn't do that yourself, depending on the rules set you are using. Woodland Realm doesn't just cover Elves, but includes

Gnolls, Centaurs and Werewolves to name just a few. All are looked after and attention to detail is great. Even the Tiny Pixies have great detail to them, and I'd love to see them painted up in all their glory. In fact, a careful removal of the base and some strong wire could make them appear to be flying with ease.

So any bad points to the armies...no not really. At the 6mm scale to get something to look how you want it to be, is a



not to want them at your side when your charging an Undead Horde.



feat in itself. The models are well sculpted, with plenty of detail to make them look good instead of like blobs of metal. Like any gamer, I'd love to see more options for the troops so they don't all look the same, but

that's being purely picky. With the cost of shipping, if I was looking for a 6mm army I'd certainly consider Microworld Games as a very viable option. With new things being added like the Woodland Realms Hawk Riders it's not a static range it's an expanding one.

I'm now looking forward to the point where Steve is happy with the Sci-Fi range so I can get my hands on them. From what's on the site to date, I don't think they will disappoint at all.

GRUNTZ

THE EVOLUTION OF THE GAME.

"Gruntz is a dedicated 15mm fast play wargame designed for skirmish level play with between 10 to 40 figures per side using combined arms.

The system is designed to be quick to learn with limited reference to tables and most tabletop play is based on the use of simple profile cards for all units, Vehicle, Artillery, Mecha and Specialist unit rules. You are able to play mixed armour and Gruntz squad units or a dedicated armour game for players that enjoy some metal on the table.

The rules and statistics in Gruntz cover modern and futuristic technology, allowing for low tech and high tech mixed battles. Statistics are provided for alien technology and weird war style creatures like World War II zombies and Werewolves. You can use technology from various era's, so hi-tech can meet low tech on Earth based or in Alien fields of battle."

Last year I started to notice a new game demo appearing at the shows that used what seems like a miss match of different models. I have to admit that I thought it was just someone playing a participation game with the miniatures they had laying about. It seemed a bit like the days, when as a child, before you knew about rules and complete miniature ranges, you just played the game with whatever you had in the toy box. I was intrigued, but as you do when you are at the shows, there is so much to do and see, and the fact that the table was always busy, it was something on the list for later. This was my first impression of Gruntz.

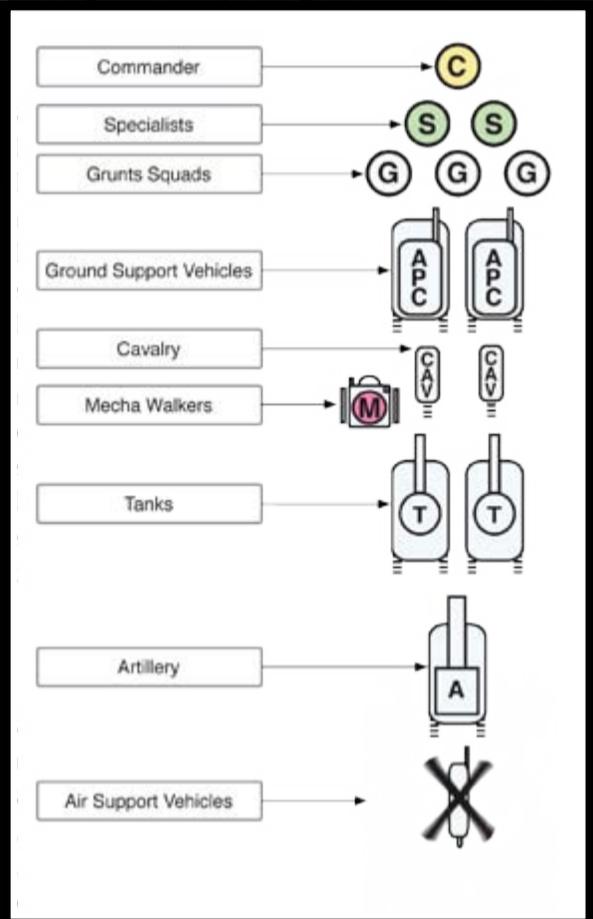
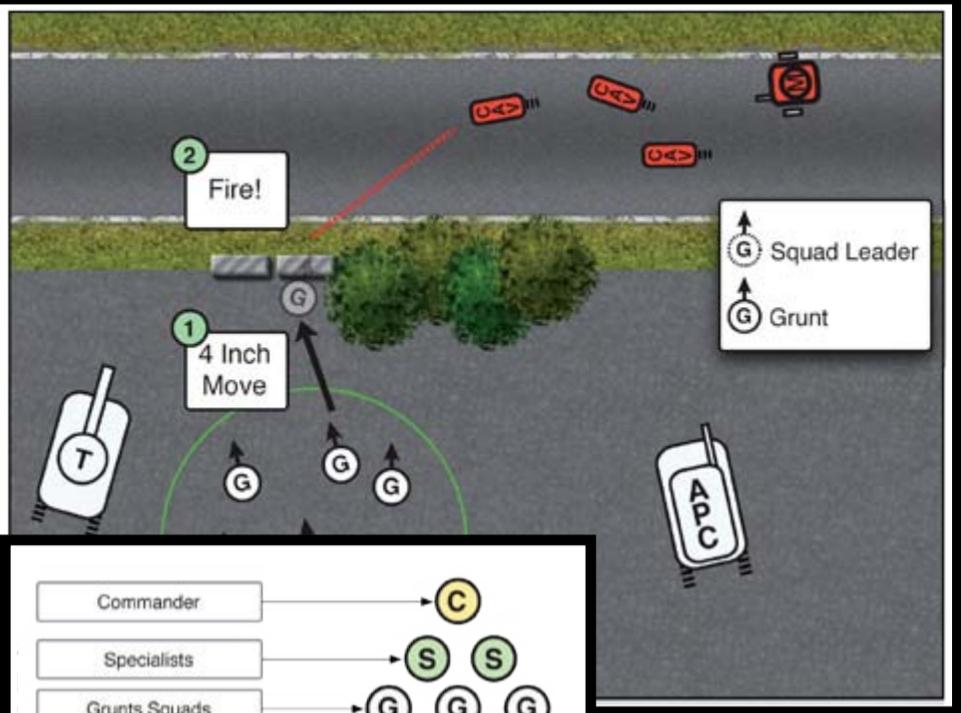
The thing was that this demo game just kept on turning up. There was a web site and video reports of the battles fought at the shows and the guy behind the game, Robin Fitton, was quite open about using other people's miniatures, and everyone seemed to be happy about it. A very refreshing approach from all concerned and my interest was piqued.

Next thing I did was to go and join the Gruntz Yahoo group. I did a bit of lurking and tried and get a handle on what this was all about.



So what is the concept behind Gruntz? Robin has created a 15mm (though to be honest it would work in any scale) set of rules that allow you to create your own force based on the models you like. You are not tied to any one manufacturer or even one faction. True pick and mix, and yes I really do mean that. Further more, you can create the stats for any model by following the simple unit construction included in the rules.

Since we are talking about the rules, let's dig a bit deeper into those and take a look at how it all works. The rules have been developed through a Yahoo group and from what I can gather a lot of the feedback from the members has been incorporated into the rules. These are then sent out for play testing and the cycle starts again. If you want to take part, simply join the Gruntz Yahoo group (more details at the end of the article).



digress, back to review. I have been holding off doing this review until the Gruntz rules were in a finished state, and were reviewable. This is down to the fact that it's not fair reviewing a work in progress where you may find fault with something that was fixed the night before and you don't have

the universe and the aliens want our resources. (You get what I am talking about) I am hoping that Robin and the team have plans to expand the background into more of a story. There is information about the setting and context of the game but it lacks the personal stories of bravery and heroism that some of the other games have, though in saying this, these are the first cut of the core rules and I'm sure that there is a lot more to come. You see, I have fallen into the very trap I was trying to avoid.

Moving on, Gruntz is traditional in the fact that it uses D6 mechanics to decide the outcomes and it uses a points system to decide the size of the action. There are few terms you need to be aware of before we get going. Perkz – are special abilities that Gruntz Units can use; Modz – ditto but for vehicles. These are not particularly revolutionary but the naming of them fits in with the Gruntz overall branding.

Before we go any further, I need to bring something to your attention. When you read the rules and the introduction you may, like me, do a bit of a double take... yes the rules are actually saying that you have

the fixed copy in front of you. So when a suitable version arrived in my Drop-box the other day, then I got cracking.

As rule sets go, they are just a shade over 50 pages with about 35 of them being the core rules; 10 pages of guides for getting your units into the game and the remainder being what we would refer to as fluff or background. The layout is neat and effective with everything in a logical order for learning and playing the game. There are very clear and concise pictures and diagrams throughout the rules that are used to illustrate particular examples. The nice thing about having the rules in this order is that you get into playing the game quickly without having to read through pages and pages of background. It's just my view, but I will only read the background if I engage with the game. Life is too short to be reading about another post apocalyptic near utopian society that has been ravaged by power struggles between rival factions only to be united when it is discovered that we are not alone in

Model Name	TITAN MARINES INFANTRY	Points	23 PTS
Photo		Background	Titan Marines are elite forces trained on Saturn's Moon, Titan. Elite Marines were chosen from Earth Force ranks and sent to Firebase Kraken on Titan. 5 Marines and 1 Leader.
Stat Block	5 4 11 12 6 5	Assault Damage	4
Assault and Ranged Weapons	Titan Auto Rifle	Weapon Range and Weapon Damage	9 6
Perks	Lifer Juice One game use: Auto heal up to 3 Gruntz at the beginning of a unit activation, ability that applies to this Gruntz squad and squad attachment(s).	Mini Manufacturer	Rebel Minis

a single 15mm figure on a base and it acts as part of a unit of 6. So I am playing skirmish with 15mm figures... mmmmm not so sure about that. However, that is just one of the options. You can also only use vehicles and not use infantry at all. This gives flexibility and it adds to the overall sense of scale of the battlefield.

Ok, back to concentrating on the rules, you see how easily I get distracted. The rules go on to explain about Force setup, Squad coherency and all the other good things that we all know and love. Like a lot of the games coming out today, in order to get around having to remember all the stats, Gruntz uses profile cards for every squad/vehicle and that makes it easy

Base Cost

16 Points



Tank Size

Medium

4 Points

Mobility

Grav

3 Points

Weapons Systems

Anti Inf 1

1 Point

Main 1

1 Point

Weapons Selection

Light
Projectile

0 Points

Medium
Projectile

2 Points

Modz
SelectionNeutonic
Damping

3 Points

Crew Skill

Expert (6)

8 Points

Total

38 Points

when trying to figure out what the statistics are. The rules also tell you how to create your own units, and there are blank cards available for download from the Gruntz Yahoo group. What I have also noticed is that as other people include the various models into their games, they share the stat cards so it saves you having to go through the creation process. This is community working at its best!

The shooting resolution mechanic is simple in as much as you calculate and (use?) modifiers for moving measure the range to get a further modifier, roll 2D6 and add that to the "shoot" value of the unit. If you have rolled higher than the targets "guard" value you have scored a hit.

Once you have hit, you need to do damage and that again is fairly simple to do. Look at the Weapons Damage and add this to 2d6 and if you score higher than the targets "soak" value then you score

1 damage point. If this is a vehicle you are attacking then every point over the soak value of the vehicle does 1 extra point of damage. As you can see from the Vehicle stat card you need to do a lot of damage to bring down the vehicle.

I could go through the rest of the rules like a good reviewer and tell you all about assaulting vehicles and buildings, but I don't think I am going to. I really want you all to get on the web and get hold of the rule set

and try them for yourselves. I will however, take a couple more seconds to mention my two top favourite things about the rules. Ramming...you can ram your vehicle into others, and you have the ability to destroy buildings. Never mind all this hard cover nonsense, in real war if there are troops hiding in a building, then the building gets levelled. I like this rule!

At a first pass, the rules may seem light and I think that Robin has tried to make them as such in order to let players get on with the job in hand...playing the game. Throughout the rules there are little design notes which have been added to give extra information and suggestions. Like any rule set they will not be for everyone, but you won't know till you have tried.

You have been through the rules and picked your force, added in your favourite models, given then PerkZ and Modz and are ready to take on all comers. You have read the core rules (in about 10 minutes) and then you come to the section about optional rules. These have been added in as an extra just so you can try something a bit different. Though like the suggestion says, they are probably better played once you are familiar with the game.

So in summary, should you go out there and get a copy of Gruntz? Duh! Yes! Even though these rules are the first release, I suspect having talked to Robin, that there is a lot more to come. The rule set is one of those rare gems that as well as being a work of passion, has been well thought out, well laid out and is flexible enough to allow you to use the models you already have. You have a wide choice in what force you play, and providing that you stick to the unit building formula, then you will not create something that is too powerful versus point's value. I think the thing that makes the game really interesting is the fact that you can use any model and create scenarios in any genre from modern to repelling the alien invaders.

I am really excited about the future of Gruntz, as I can see a point where these rules become something more than just 15mm and with one 6 man squad and a few vehicles, it is not beyond the imagination to have 28mm, 54mm, WWII or even ancients...though they might need a bit more work as you don't often see a Celt carrying a chain gun.

If you are interested in getting hold of a copy of Gruntz, then a trial version is available for download from the Gruntz Yahoo group. and You can find the link to it, together with more details on the <http://www.gruntz.biz> web site.

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CRUSADER

**STAFFORD
GAMES**





We ask Craig Gardy and Dale Hurst of Critical Mass games some probing questions (or not as the case may be)

KR: How long have you been wargaming and how did you get introduced?

Craig: I was first introduced to Wargaming around 18 years ago through Games Workshops Space Crusade which my late grandfather bought me as a Christmas present. I had vivid memories for setting all the miniatures up in the spare room in his house and battling with the across room regardless of the rules.

Dale: I suppose it was Airfix plastic soldiers on the living room floor as a kid; in my teens it was D & D with friends and then came Warhammer, I think it was second edition, the boxed version with three soft-back books and the "Magnificent Seven" scenario. From there on it just mushroomed and I have been in the hobby 30 years.

KR: What was the first game you ever bought?

Craig: The first game I bought for myself was Epic Space Marine a game I loved to play and had massive armies for.

Dale: Board game - Talisman or possibly Bloodbowl first edition, whichever was earliest, Computer game - Attic Attack 48k Spectrum, RPG - D&D Red box, Wargame - Warhammer

KR: If you had to choose one thing from your wargaming collection to keep then what would it be?

Craig: That's a difficult so I will cheat a little and say I carry a case with the painted figures I have received as gifts. As people who know me will tell you I am very mercenary when it comes to chopping and changing my miniatures collection, but I have always kept every miniature I have received as a gift, included in the case is a unit of 15mm Sherman 76's I received for my 30th birthday and a 40K Ork big mech painted by Dale in a talents exchange we did some time ago.

Dale: The 4 Golden Demon Trophies I won in the late 80's.

KR: What made you create Critical Mass?

Craig: Critical Mass Games was born out of idle conversation and around 6 months planning. Dale and I had just played a 15mm sci-fi game using some rules I wrote around 10 years using some random figures I had in my collection and decided we could do the whole thing a lot better, particularly in terms of miniatures as what we had was looking decidedly dated.

Dale: The idea to set up a new company was mine, I thought a Company level 15mm sci-fi game was a good idea, especially if we offered the complete package, rules, figures, vehicles, buildings, terrain, background etc. I knew Craig had produced several sets of rules including some 15mm Sci-fi ones and I had designed and produced several sets of buildings and

scenic bases in resin. So I suggested a few drinks at the pub and pitched the idea and that's how it happened with two people with the skill and drive to make it happen.

KR: What were you doing before you started creating Critical Mass?

Craig: Before Critical Mass Games, well there is so much, I have worked as a freelance miniature painter in the mid nineties, moved around several dull administrative jobs after that and finally ended up working in the security industry as an engineer firstly building and then installing CCTV and security systems, though my education was IT based.

Dale: I was designing buildings for Kerr and King

KR: Where did the idea for the game come from?

The game was initially a d20 home grown system written by me ten years 10 years ago after I started collecting random 15 mm sci-fi miniatures, it was clunky and crude. The Critical Mass rules system has evolved out of that initial idea.

KR: What does Critical Mass have that other games systems don't have?

I'd say a depth of playability and situational control that will not be apparent in your first game.

Critical Mass does have a lot of individual elements that people will find common place, for example the game utilises alternative actions which means player involvement is always high in a game round even when it is not your turn to activate a unit. Mastery of this is what keeps bringing people back as they learn how best to manipulate situations using the rules to their full potential.

It has been commonly observed that new players often get suckered into dancing to the other players tune as they will try and play the game as a micro lgo-ugo system over reacting to an attack when their current action when they would actually benefit more by activating units elsewhere and playing their own game. In some ways it is like chess with more armour and guns!

A unique element of the game are the communications rules which give players the ability to call in tactical and orbital strikes during the game through a fluctuating communications pool. The pool is increased each turn through comms vehicles and objectives on the battlefield, whilst it is decreased calling by calling in the support. Counter communications can be used by your opponent to nullify this. Managing these resources right in a game can make a big difference to

your fortunes particularly as only certain units can call in and provide resources in game.

KR: Whenever you are not working on Critical Mass what else do you get up to?

Craig: Outside of Critical Mass.....well that's not much these days, design meetings, casting, packing, painting, photography, rules writing web site updates, time just disappears these days.

I do to get to the gym 3 times a week having been on a personal mission to loose weight over the last few years, I am 6 and half stone lighter than I was. Other than that I keep Friday evening free as I run Wigan wargames club that I setup in 2003.

Dale: Occasionally sleep but mostly lie awake running things over in my mind.

KR: Where and when would people be able to get a demo?

We try to have a participation game of Critical Mass at every show we attend in the UK, so if we are there just drop by and we will run you through game. Failing that get in touch with me I will be happy to run a game for you at Wigan Wargames club.

KR: What would you say were the key skills to creating a new game?

Craig: I think one of the most important skills for a games designer is simply to listen to play testers. Throwing rules down is easy, but comprehending there impact across the rules is often difficult as you become so close to them. You will understand how you want them to work but how a rule is written may not be comprehended that way or indeed play out how you had planned in your mind.

Dale: Imagination, self belief, general maths, any skill that allows you to make something happen instead of having to pay a third party is invaluable. Self criticism and sheer bloody mindedness also have a valuable part to play.

KR: When you decide to bring a new model into the game how do you go about doing it?

How do you make sure that the new models fit in and aren't too powerful?

Play testing is the simple answer, the rules for a unit are written and pointed and then played, over and over, tweaked, and played over until it is right.

KR: How do you see the game evolving?

Critical Mass will evolve as a game with more rules being added in for new armies and scenarios to drive players interest in battling with there miniatures. We have lots of ideas being bandied about all the time.

You recently started producing scenery, whose idea was that?

Producing scenery was in the plan from the very beginning. We will produce a set of buildings for each

main faction in the game. The ARC fleet already have an extensive selection of buildings and this year will see the release of building sets for the Kaamados Dominion and the Protolene Khanates. Previews of both sets can be found on the Critical Mass Games forum.

KR: What is the most expensive wargaming item you have ever bought?

Craig: So far for Critical Mass Games, the casting equipment, for myself personally it would have to be my lwata revolution airbrush, I am a big fan of airbrush painting, I just wish I had more time to use it.

Dale: My Critical Mass army, everyone thinks we get ours for free but they are the most expensive figures I've ever owned.

KR: Do you have any models on your desk at work?

Craig: Only models that are going to be packed for orders unfortunately. My desktop monitor is a different matter being festooned with Squamata along the top that Dale painted as test colour schemes.

Dale: Besides the horde of modelling projects I have on the go I have a lot of large scale figures and busts, of which the 1/6th Hellboy model is my favourite, it's a beast!

KR: What was the last book you read?

Craig: The complete Hammer Slammers volume 1 by David Drake, I have been a late comer to this series.

Dale: Boneshaker by Cherie Priest, currently reading Leviathan by Scott Westerfield, Mech by B.V. Larson and The Winter King by Bernard Cornwell.

KR: What's your favorite movie of all time?

Craig: There are lots of films I enjoy, but Excalibur always remains one of my favorites.

Dale: Wow, tough one I want to say either Casablanca or The Maltese Falcon, but the film I've seen most must be my favourite, right? In which case it's hands down Jason and the Argonauts, saw it as a little boy one evening on TV with my mother, then it always seemed to be aired on Christmas eve and it became a bit of a tradition for me and my father to watch it together and a still do every Christmas eve without fail.

KR: Do you have a gaming room at home?

Craig: No but I do have a Wargames club five minutes from my door.

Dale: Afraid not, would be nice though.

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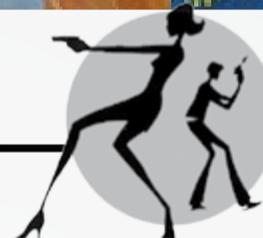
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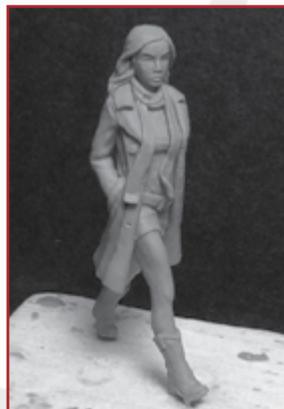


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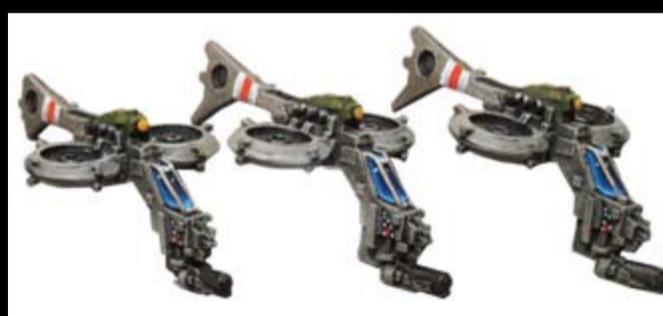
EXODUS WARS

BY JEZ FAIRCLOUGH

We last looked at some of the Exodus war's miniatures way back in Issue 2 and since then the range has continued to expand.

This time around they sent us a couple of the new releases and it was nice to see them in the flesh rather than just have a look at them online. The range is designed for 6mm combat or as Ian put it back in his review 1/300th scale.

The new Edenite Tanks come in 3 versions, the Reaper, the Reaver and the Revenant. Like many companies the main hull structure of these 3 tanks is the same showing the common bond between their manufacture. It's not a new idea and it's been done many times before by other companies but it does allow a range to expand on a standard structure. For me that's a very sensible idea as it makes it cost effective for a company to give its consumers a varied choice. What's different in each



case is the weapons mounting, the Reaper I love two huge rotary cannons on its turret pretty much tell you that this is designed for clearing away those pesky infantry units that like to get in a tanks way. Though with the sort of weapons it mounts it's not going to be for long. The Revenant is a standard looking tank with a long barrelled weapon I'd say designed for hitting heavily armoured vehicles or other tanks. The whole fact that the guns poke out of a stylised skull only

add's to the charm. Now people could use these for traitor or rebel forces but I'd love to use them as an elite hunter/Killer unit. They just have the right look about them.

The models themselves are great well detailed at all levels be it armour plating on hatches. So you're getting a great model at the end of the day and I'd say they are a little better overall than some other 6mm companies I've seen to date.

The Guild Electra Hvy Tank is an awesome looking beast with plenty of options beyond the fact that its twice the size of the Edenite Tanks. It has an imposing large barrelled weapon that's looks like it'll make a mockery of anything you're lucky enough to hit (Pray for good dice I'd say.) Nice little drop holes to add the extra elements into make it pretty simple to build.

I like what Steel Crown are doing with their range. The individual

Infantry is very nice and the vehicles look great as well. They've even added some Valkyrie transports for the Khazari which look great with twin rotor style either side of the main body.

To be honest it's a certain can't wait to see what they bring out next. If you're looking for some solid 6mm Sci-Fi miniatures to either start out or to expand a given range you'd do yourself no harm by looking these guys up.



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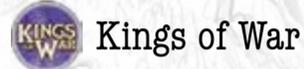
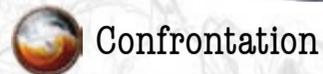
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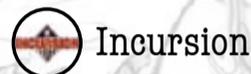
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BAYOU SWAMP BOARD

By Pat Ohta

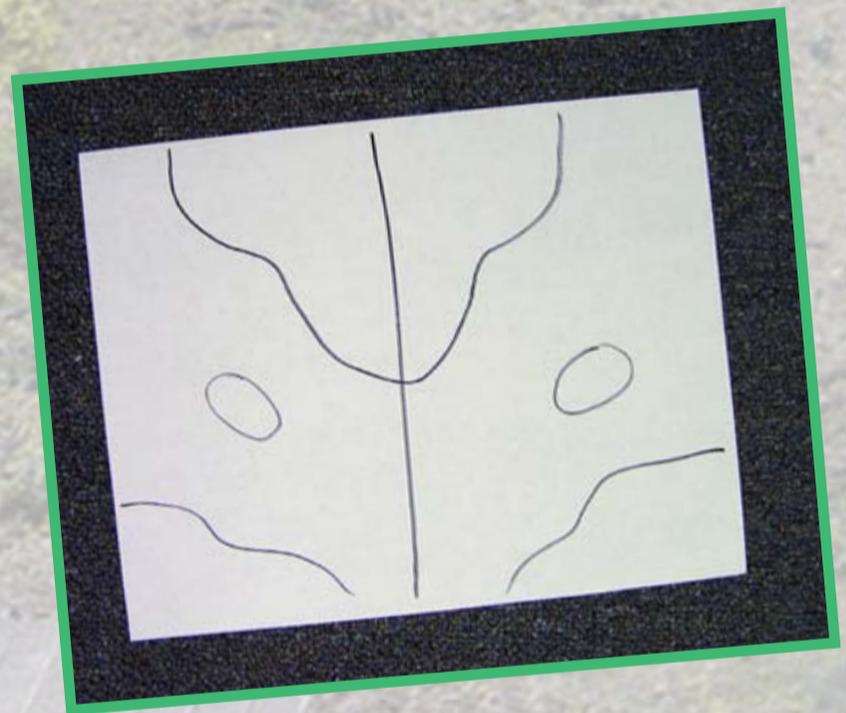
I wanted to make a generic and modular swamp board that could be used for more than one game system. This board will be a great setting for games like Warmachine, Malifaux, and various pulp games.

This tutorial will not be giving you precise measurements. Instead it will provide you with the general knowledge of how to make a board like this one. This will allow you to make a board of whatever size best suits your game.

- Supplies Needed:
- Sharp Hobby Knife
- Hobby Saw
- Wire Cutters
- Various Gauge Wire
- Hot Glue
- Wood Glue
- Foam Board
- Popsicle Sticks
- Aves Apoxie Sculpt
- Sand Paper
- Polyester Batting
- Sand
- Clear Casting Resin
- Woodland Scenics Scenic Cement, Foliage Clusters, Dead Foliage and Fine Turf
- Skull crafts Vegetation and Leaf Scatter
- Scenic Express Dark Adirondack Blend and Dead Fall Debris
- Rocks and Branches

The Board

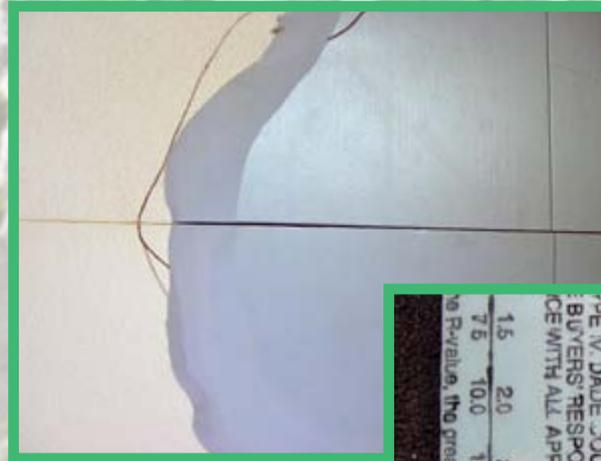
1. This board will be a 4X4, made up of two 2X4 sheets of expanded polystyrene. The board will be comprised of land forms and a low tide swamp. Place the two sheets side by side. Start by drawing out where the land forms will be. If you want your board to be modular, make a template so the pieces line up correctly.



2. Use a hot wire cutter and cut out your land forms



3. Bevel the edges of the board. Make sure miniatures can stand on the edges and not fall over.



4. Sand down the edges to remove any rough spots.

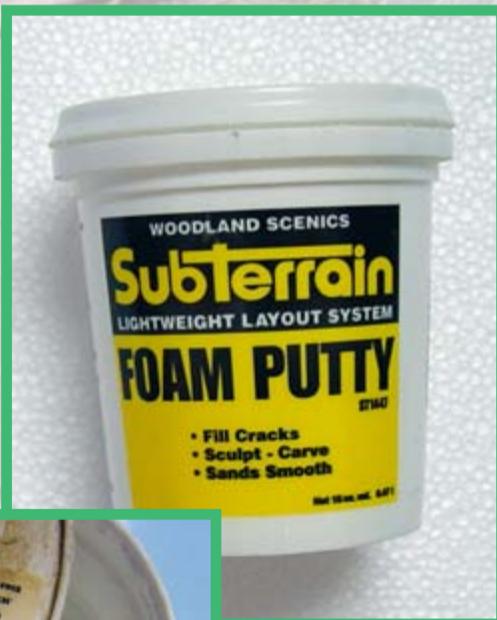


7. Sand down the foam putty when it is dry.
8. Make little islands to go into the middle of the swamp. Cut these out of foam, sand down the edges and glue them down.



5. Glue the land forms to the board.

6. Fill any gaps in the board with Woodland Scenics Foam Putty. The putty goes on as a paste and dries hard. If your boards don't line up properly you can use the putty to build up



the edges. Apply the putty to the seam between the land form and the board.

Making the Trees

1. Start by making the armature. Use different gauge wires. For my trees, I mixed .030" and .062" gauge wires. Cut 15-20 pieces of wire, each 20" long. Bundle these wires together.
2. Start by making the trunk of the tree. Wrap 2-3 pieces of wire around a central wire to form a trunk.



es of wire around the bundle. Keep wrapping until your trunk is 5" long.

3. Next, make your first branch. Do this by grouping 3-4 wires together. Take one of the wires and start wrapping around



the bundle. Continue this process and make your branches. Snip off any excess wire.

4. Continue working up the tree, making your branches as you go. Add more wire if you need to.



the tree and the branches.

8. Use a sculpting tool to add detail. Be sure to make the surface of the tree lumpy and uneven.
9. Add texture to the trunk by pressing a nylon wash cloth against the wet putty. Make sure the wash cloth is wet to prevent it from sticking to the putty.



5. When you are done, shape your tree by bending the trunk and the branches.
6. Next, bulk out the tree by adding Aves Apoxie Sculpt. Apoxie Sculpt is a fantastic 2 part modeling compound. Mix equal parts A&B and apply it to the armature.



7. Keep your fingers wet to prevent the putty from sticking to them. Work the putty into the wire. Make the base of the tree thick and apply less putty to the top of



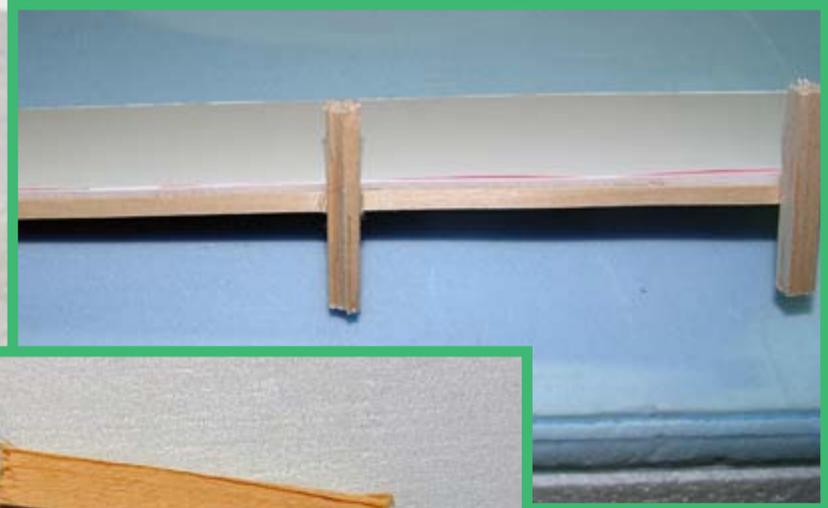
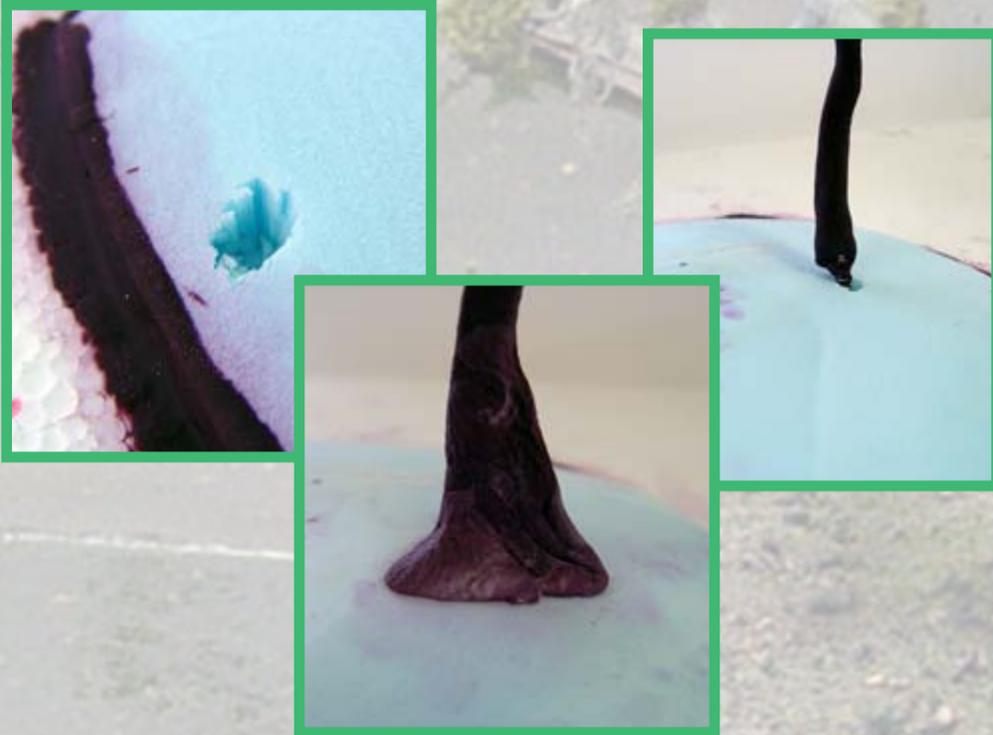
10. Set the trees aside to dry.
11. Figure out the placement of the trees on your board.



Cluster them together or spread them out. Keep game playability in mind.

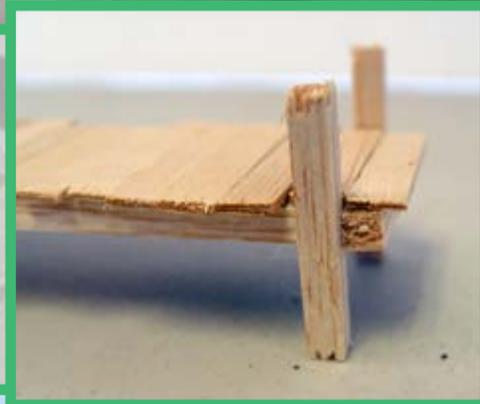
12. Once you have decided where the trees will go, make a hole in the board for each tree and place the trees in them. Use more Apoxie Sculpt to bulk out the bottom of each tree and to contour them to fit the ground.

2. Line the sides of the foam board by gluing thin wooden strips along the edge.
3. Add posts to the dock. Cut 1 1/2" posts out of bass wood or balsa wood. Glue these to the sides of the dock. Weather the edges of the post



by scraping a sharp hobby knife against them.

4. Add planks to the dock. Cut popsicle sticks 2" long. Use a hobby saw to scribe wood lines into the sticks. Glue the sticks to the foam board.

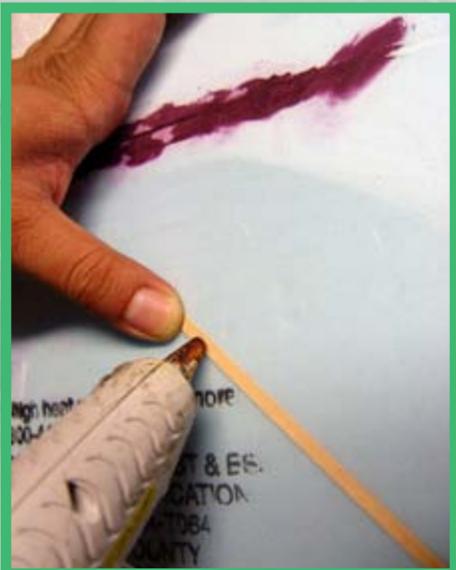


The Docks

1. Figure out where you want your docks to be. Cut out an approximately sized piece of foam board. Make sure your docks are at least 2" wide to accommodate miniature bases.



commodate miniature bases.



- To add more interest to your docks, vary the lengths and widths of each stick.
- Glue the docks to the board.

Rocks and Fallen Trees

- Go to the park and look for small branches and rocks to add to your board. Clean up the branches and glue these to the board.



- I like to add these items to the shoreline section of the board.



- Now cover the entire board with sand. Start by painting wood glue over the entire board. While the glue is still wet, apply the sand. When the glue is dry, dump off the excess sand.

Painting and Flocking the Board

- Prime the board black. When dry, start painting the board in a dark brown tone and dry brush up to a lighter brown. Paint the trees, rocks, docks and fallen logs too.



- At this time, paint any additional elements you added to the board. For my board, I added crocodiles and a turtle.



- Apply a coat of wood glue to the land sections of the board. While the glue is still wet, sprinkle Woodland Scenics Fine Turf all over the surface. Glue small bushes of Woodland Scenics Dead Foliage and Foliage Clusters along the coast line.



4. Add little plants by gluing down Skullcrafts Vegetation to the board.



Woodland Scenic Cement. This item is similar to a watered down



PVA glue.

Finishing the Trees

1. Glue small tufts of Woodland Scenics Foliage Clusters to the branches of the trees.



5. Next, apply Scenic Express Dark Adirondack



2. Glue Spanish Moss to the branches of the trees. To make the Spanish Moss, first start by cutting small 3" sections of polyester batting. You can find polyester batting at sewing stores.



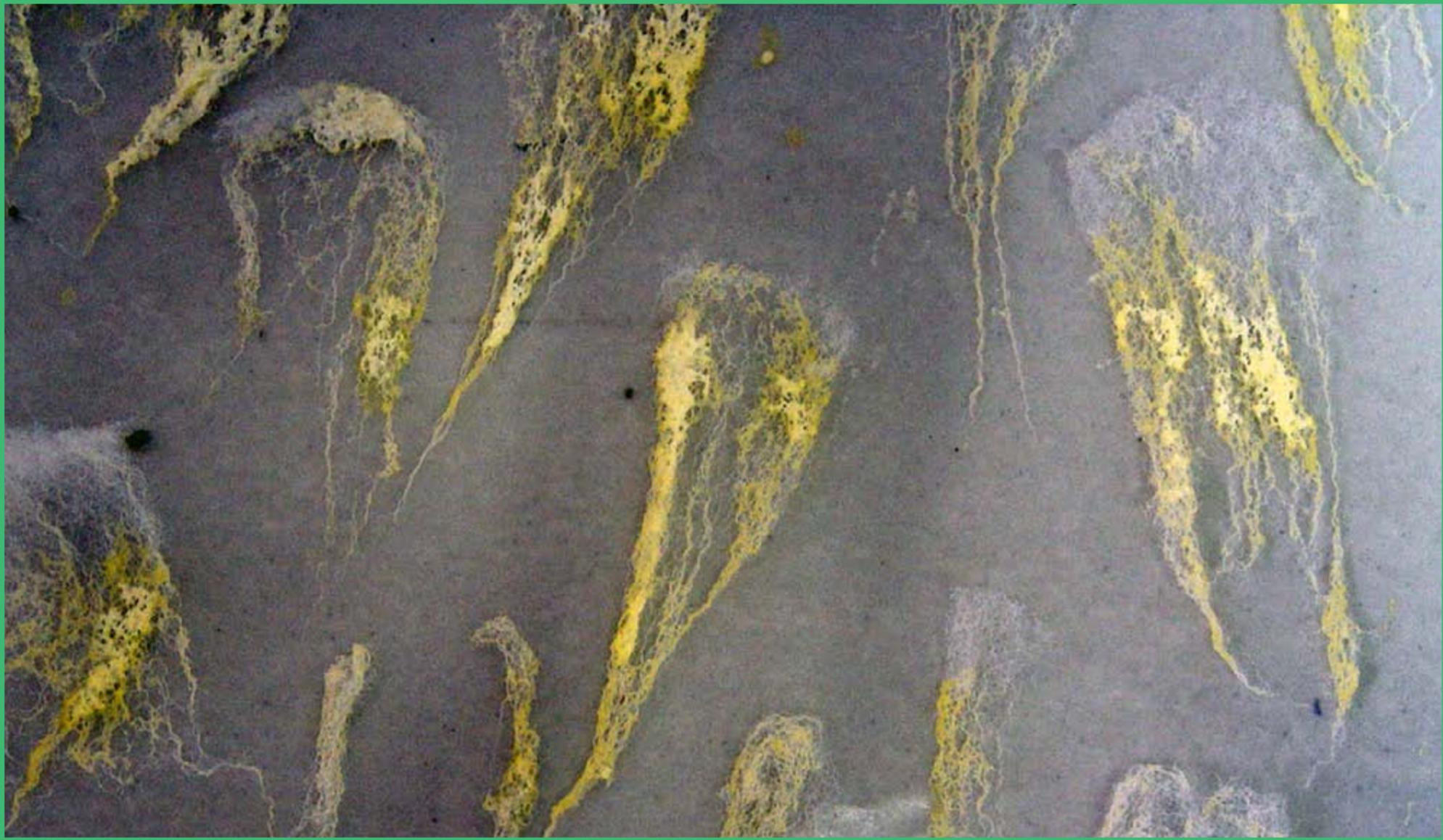
3. Tease the batting so the material is not so clustered together.



Blend and Dead Fall Debris to the board.

6. Seal all of the flocking material to the board by spraying

4. Paint wood glue onto the batting and stretch it out.



5. Set it aside to dry.
6. When dry paint it a grey green.
3. Add Woodland Scenics Fine Turf and Skullcrafts Leaf Scatter to your resin.

The Swamp

1. Make a dam and seal off anywhere the resin will be able to leak out. To make the damn cut long strips of plastic and glue them to the side of the board. Apply mold release to the plastic.



2. Make the swamp by using any clear casting resin. Follow your directions carefully and be sure to do this in a well ventilated area.



- Mix this in well. It will become suspended in the resin and look cool.



- Add variety and better playability by making bridges. Make the bridges the same wall as the dock.

Additional Tip

- Instead of having your trees fixed to the board, you can make them removable. To do this use PVC pipe fittings. Cut a small $\frac{3}{4}$ " piece of pipe and glue it to the bottom of each tree. Glue the appropriate sized pipe fitting into the board.



Following these simple steps will allow you to make any swamp or body of water for your gaming boards. Have fun!









Infinity Miniatures Review

by
Jez
Fairclough

INFINITI

January New releases



Hassassin Muyibs (Rifle + Light LG, D.E.P.).

Haqqislamite players can now create more complete and varied Muiyb Fireteams, with these new weapon options. The Light Grenade Launcher can provide a rain of death over the enemy, but also a smoke curtain to cover the advance of allied troops. On the other side, the D.E.P. is the last goodbye kiss to the adversary. The Muiyb are the jack-of-all-trades of the Hassassin sect, tough and versatile troops that can be employed in different aggressive combat roles. Do you fancy to blow away some enemies? Now its your turn with the Muiyb.



Teutonic Knights (Spitfire).

It's said that the Teutonic Knights are characterized by an unshakeable faith and outrageous war-like fervor, and also they are the most fanatical of troops in combat. This Teuton Knight armed with the fast Spitfire will not stop to shoot to the enemy until reach the close combat. Now all PanOceanian players can greet their adversaries in the Teuton style, with a high caliber close-up burst!



Sophotects (Doctor, Engineer).

New release! The Sophotects are the technical support and immediate reaction medical operatives of the ALEPH's little army. They are equipped with an expensive Mother-Forge, a highly sophisticated device that allows them to program military and medical nanotechnology. This figure is essential to any ALEPH player, not only to recover troops and equipment, but too by its sexy modelling!

Prowlers (Spitfire).

The Special Action Service, better known as the Prowlers, is a sort of improved commando unit, with competences and specific skills, created with the sole purpose of making early contact with the enemy and causing the most possible damage. And there is no weapon like the Spitfire to cause damage in short and medium range. Don't get wrong by the quiet stance of this Nomads troop, he is capable to break up the advance of any enemy force!



Yaogat Strike Infantry (Multi Sniper Rifle) (Combined Army)(Blister 1 figure).

The Yaogat Strike Infantry is the Morat hunter-killer unit. They are specialized in hunting down enemy hidden sharpshooters, and their best anti-sniping operator is the Yaogat Sniper. Combining his Multispectral Visor L2 and the range of his sniper rifle, this Morat Medium Infantry trooper can detect and eliminate any camouflaged unit. The Yaogat Sniper can not only form part of a Yaogat Fireteam, but can also dominate the battlefield from the rearguard.

Reviewing Beta rules is always difficult and I can see why Kenny doesn't like doing it. You are never sure whether you are reviewing the right version of the rules and how far behind the latest version you are. Has the mechanic changed? Who knows apart from the games designer?

Let me say up front that this review is of the latest supplied rules from Critical Mass Games and we at the Ancible did check with them before we did the review to make sure that the rules were in a stable enough state to give a reasonable view of the current game that is demoed by Critical Mass at the shows. I will however review the rules and associated files as they have been sent to us though I do realise that at some point they will be amalgamated into a single volume, possibly.

Rather impressively we received 4 PDF files which consisted of the core rules, Critical Mass Mission Pack, the arc fleet battle force and the Kaamados Legion.

The Core Rules

"Critical Mass is a company level 15mm Sci-Fi Miniatures Game designed to be played on a tabletop battlefield using Critical Mass Miniatures.

Armies are selected from a list where by every troop type in the game has been allocated a

points value. A small game of 1000 can be played on a 4ft x 4ft table in around

1 hour. When playing larger battles you should add

approximately half an hour's play time for each additional 500-1000 points and increase the battlefield size to 6ft x 4ft or bigger."

Moving onto the actual rule book its self. As these rules are technically still in beta the guys at Critical Mass have not spent much time looking at the layout so there is not much to say on that front. I look forward to seeing the finished article with all the graphics and funky things they are going to add in. The good news is that there are some diagrams explaining some of the more contentious issue that we gamers like to discuss in the heat of tabletop battles. Need I say line of sight and cover bonuses to name but a couple

Game Mechanics

Critical Mass used the D6 system for working out the outcomes of the various actions. This involves using a 6 sides dice. Occasionally the rules require the use of a D3 but in this case roll the D6 and allocate the numbers as follows $1\&2 = 1$, $3\&4 = 2$ and $5\&6 = 3$. Some instances in the game may require you to re-roll dice. The second result always takes precedence regardless of the result. All distances are measured in inches and you are allowed to pre measure from nearest point to nearest point on the base of the model. Different model types have recommended base sizes and to the experienced 15mm gamer these should not be surprising.

Each unit in your army has an activation token which sits in the activation pool. This will become clearer later in the review.

Each unit in the game has a set of stats which are split into 2 sections. The first section deals with the unit and it's abilities and the second with the weapon(s) the unit has.

Type - The type indicates what the base is recognised as in the game, it also indicates the standard move for the base.

Ranged Defence (RDef) - The ranged defence value represents how well trained and

armoured a base is against ranged attacks. This is the value an attacker needs to roll on a single D6 in order for a ranged attack to succeed against this troop type. Note battlefield conditions may affect this value.



Close Combat Defence (CDef) - The close combat defence value represents how well trained and armoured a base is against close combat attacks. This is the value an attacker needs to roll on a single D6 in order for a close combat attack to succeed against this troop type.

Assault (A) - The Assault values represent how well trained and equipped a base is in close combat. The first number shown is how many dice this base rolls when attacking while the second number is its damage value against walkers, vehicles and VTOL's.

Morale Level (ML) - The morale level indicates how well troops will fight and respond to the rigours of combat around them and how well they will work as a team; whether it is through devotion, training or sheer stupidity. The morale level of troops can greatly affect how long they will remain in the battle.

Armour - Armour is only used by walkers and vehicles and represents how well protected they are from the various weapons used against them. Armour is split into three separate values; the first represents the combat armour on the front and side, the second represents the rear armour and the third represents the top armour of the vehicle.

Special - This area will note any special abilities that your troops possess. This could be powerful technology or abilities inherent to a particular race.

Weapon - Name of the weapon.

Range (RNG) - The weapon's maximum distance at which it can attack.

Attack Dice (AD) - Represents the firepower a base can put out against an enemy. This value is typically 1 for basic infantry types but can increase for bases with support weapons.

The value shows how many D6 dice are rolled when attacking with this base.

Damage (DAM) - The damage value indicates the weapon's ability to damage a walker or vehicle. A weapon with a damage value of "-", means the weapon is unable to damage walkers and vehicles, whilst a numeric value of "0" or higher means it can.

Special - This area will note any special abilities that relate to a weapon.

The Game Round

Each battle is fought over a number of rounds usually defined by the scenario that you are playing. Each round is split into 3 main phases

Initiative: This happens at the start of each round and the winner of the initiative roll decides which unit gets activated first. This could be you or your opponent's unit.

Activation: Now that the first active unit has been chosen then that unit does its movement firing and combat and the activation moves to the other player who can choose which unit to activate. This goes back and forward between players until all units have been activated. Critical Mass uses activation tokens to indicate which units have been activated. This stops any confusion. If at any time the active player has less activation tokens than their opponent then they can refuse to activate a unit. This is only possible if the player has less activation tokens left in their pool.

Game round end: All activation tokens are removed and the next round begins back at the initiative stage.

Action Sequence (this is what happens when you activate)

There are a number of possible actions that you can do. When you activate a unit then you must declare what you intend to do as the unit you are attacking may be able to do some sort of out of turn action (re-

action). The sorts of actions include rally, repair, advance, engage, redeploy, hunker down, dig in and Open fire. There are some others around



transporting and dropping troops though I suspect that you will eventually get to them once you are more familiar with the game.

I mentioned out of turn actions. The easiest example of these are over watch. The unit you have put into over watch as part of their activation is watching for enemy units and when the enemy unit activates and performs certain actions then the unit in over watch will get to perform a ranged attack out of turn.

Movement

Each unit type has movement stats and these are detailed in a table. Any modifiers for roads and difficult terrain are detailed in the table. There are extra tests for difficult and hazardous terrain as you would expect and there is a whole section in the rules on this subject.

Ranged Combat

Ranged combat and line of sight in any game are always the things that cause lots of problems and any game designer that ignores the detail in the section does so at their own peril of 1000 questions on the forum. I suspect that due to the detail in this section that the guys have spent many a happy hour debating the finer points before even getting onto the actual ranged combat bit.

You must declare which unit or units you are firing at and with what weapons. There are the usual modifiers and then you simply have to beat the units ranged defence value with what you roll plus or minus modifiers.

There is an opportunity to save against the hits and if you fail, you die. Nice and simple.

Close Combat

If you manage to get in nice and close then you may want to charge the enemy. This is where things get a little different as there is a new twist added into the mix. If the defender declares over watch then there is the possibility that they will get to react before receiving the charge. This potentially could reduce the number of models charging in. There is a section that explains exactly what this means but it adds the extra danger to charging in that I don't think other games have and it is probably closer to what would actually happen on the battlefield. The close combat continues not just for one round of gory bludgeoning but until one unit is defeated or they disengage.

The rest of the close combat system is I would say the most complicated thing about the Critical Mass game as the guys have tried to think of everything that might happen. Receiving fire, attack, counter attack, disengage, moral checks. It all gets quite interesting. Luckily there are some good examples in

the rule book and once you have played it a couple of times then it all becomes quite clear.

Moral

Having just come from the close combat section you can imagine that moral is an important aspect of keeping your troops fighting and when they have a particularly bad encounter then this can affect the whole of your army. Things that you really want to avoid if you can is the route test which can see vehicles destroyed and infantry running away so making sure that you keep units in command and coherency is very important.

It is inevitable that you will have to perform pinning tests and moral tests as the enemy will be firing at you and you will be taking casualties, these are the normal work of a commander though keeping a close eye on overall force strength should be your secondary focus (do I need to tell you what your primary focus should be?)

Game Round End

I know we have covered a lot and we have only got to the end of the first round, only 7 more to go. At this point we do some admin. Let's check some moral, check to see if the victory conditions for the scenario have been met, remove activation counters, play any reserve units, assemble out activation counters for the next round and gain communication dice (if the scenario dictates that we do)

Let's fight some more!

Critical Mass Mission Pack

The mission pack is as you would expect a document that explains how the missions work and the various special rules and victory conditions. The mission pack gives you some ideas as to how to create your own mission though I have to say that experienced wargamers would have no problem in taking other missions from other games systems and coming up with the necessary narrative to use them in Critical Mass.

However there are 4 scenarios as examples included for those out there who are perhaps new to the gaming world and have little or no experience of creating



missions. I have played a couple of the scenarios and they seem to work well when learning the game.

I have found in the past that the creation of this sort of section in any rule set usually means that the company have plans or would like to have plans to run tournaments as these tend to be when the official scenarios come into play.

The ARC Fleet Battle Force and Kaamados Legion

These documents give you everything you require to know about the statistics, point's costs and abilities of these two forces. These are particularly good when getting into the game. If I have one suggestion that would be to make this a bit more graphic as looking at it now it takes a couple of reads to understand how it all works.

Miniature Range

Critical Mass games have decided to produce a range of miniatures to go with the rule set and these are proving quite popular not just for the Critical Mass rules. I'm sure I saw them mentioned in another rules set that Kenny was reviewing. A large



AFVH9- Arc Fleet MKI Heavy Grav Tank

number of the vehicles and buildings are cast in resin with metal parts and I suspect that this is done to, in no small part to Dale Hurst who I'm sure a lot of you will know as the designer of buildings for another well known purveyor of fine resin bases and buildings (K&K).

Looking at the larger vehicles the quality is as you would expect from someone with the background in resin casting. They all fit together well though I have to say the walkers that I put together required about 4 hands to get them just right. I'm sure there is a technique to putting them together and making them look like they are walking rather than my attempt. They just look a bit unsteady on their feet. But let us just be clear. That is down to me and not a design fault. The tanks go together well with lots of surface detail. All the vehicles come with multiple options for weapons and I guess that rather than just pick the one I think look good it might be an idea to look at



PRSC1- Protolene Khanate Scouts Command

the stats and see which ones are best and what they were designed to take on.

If you look at the overall look and feel of each of the forces then, in my opinion, the Kaamados are the most character full and they defiantly have a lupine feel to the designs. As I write this there the guys at Critical Mass have sent us in a box of new stuff



AFLR6- Arc Fleet Recon w/grenade launchers

which I will get one of the other chaps to have a look at though in saying that I have just had a quick look and some of the 15mm figures look like some of the most detailed I have seen from Critical Mass to date.

Scenery Range

Critical Mass currently has one range of buildings for the Arc fleet and there are a number of utility buildings, ore processing and communications buildings which can be used in the game. As you would expect the buildings are crisp and clean and some of them come with removable roofs and the largest of the buildings is made up of a number of pieces that can be put together as a single building with multiple floors or you could use them as two buildings. Dale assures us that there are more buildings on the way for the other races and it will be interesting to see how these look.

Conclusion

I have played this game quite a few times and I have to say that I like it. Ok if I am honest I acquired all Kenny's miniatures when he was not looking and have been secretly playing at home. Craig and Dale



have taken the time to develop the game and get the mechanics right before taking the step of saying that the rules are final. I think that we all know that rules are never final and that v2.0 will fix all the problems in V1.0 while creating a few to fix in V3.

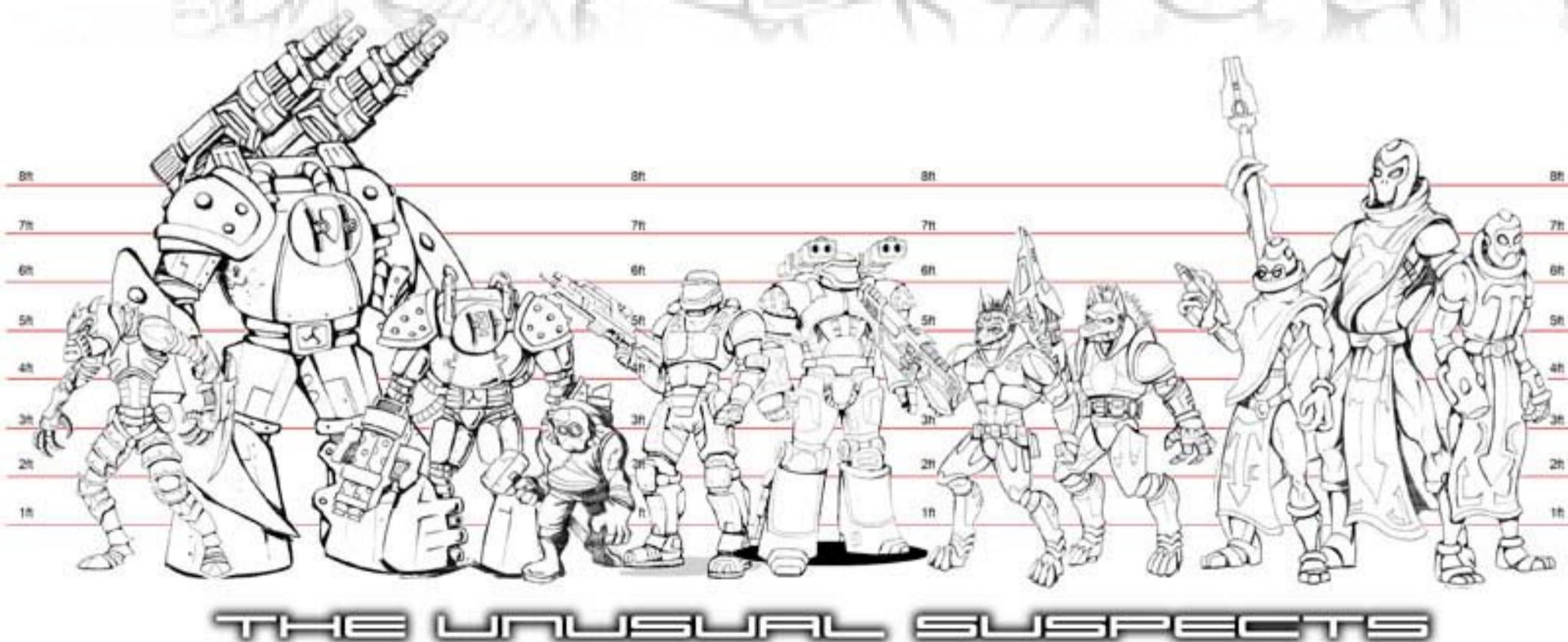
The game plays quickly and is easy to pick up though if you simply played the game as a meat grinder every time it would very quickly get down to figuring out what units were best for that. Every time I have played it has been a specific scenario that required a bit of thought while still allowing for carnage and I think that as long as the scenarios develop the game will have longevity.

On the miniature and scenery front I think the guys have done a fantastic job. There are a number of companies out there that have been around for a long time and are well established with the 15mm gamers and for them to come along and, in a reasonably short time, be a recognised company

is an amazing feat in it's self. The quality of the products speak for themselves and I haven't found a bad one yet, or should I say that Kenny hasn't found a bad one yet and I am off to see what new stuff came into the office and see if any of it will end up in my figure case.

Having just seen one of Kenny's reviews in this issue I also have to take my hat off to Craig and Dale on the work that they have done with Robin Fitton in including the Critical Mass miniature range into the Gruntz rules. This is what gaming should be about, co-operation.

So bottom line should you get out there and play Critical Mass. The simple answer is yes. If 15mm big battles is your thing then this is the game for you. I for one am looking forward to Salute and will be at the front of the queue for the Critical Mass participation game. Hopefully I will see some of you there



THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

PLANETFALL

A GRUNTZ BATTLE REPORT

BY ROBIN AND OSCAR FITTON

A skirmish level simple engagement between a Kra'Vak and Arc trooper force. This is a combined arms mix of equipment providing an introduction to the basic play in the Gruntz game. Total game time was around 70 minutes, although it took us a total of two hours due to setup time and the need to write down every action after it occurred for this battle report.

The game was played with my 11 year old son Oscar who had an uncanny intuition when it came to using the heavy armour of the Kra'Vak to his advantage. He also clearly had dice rolling devils on his side!

The names we used for the Commanders were made up for fun and are not specific character models. It just feels more appealing to us to name them, especially if they meet on the battlefield again and will need to know who they are hurling insults at.

When a Gruntz model is waxed it is about to die. On the units next activation the model will be removed from play when the squad is activated, however certain conditions can help the waxed model including medics

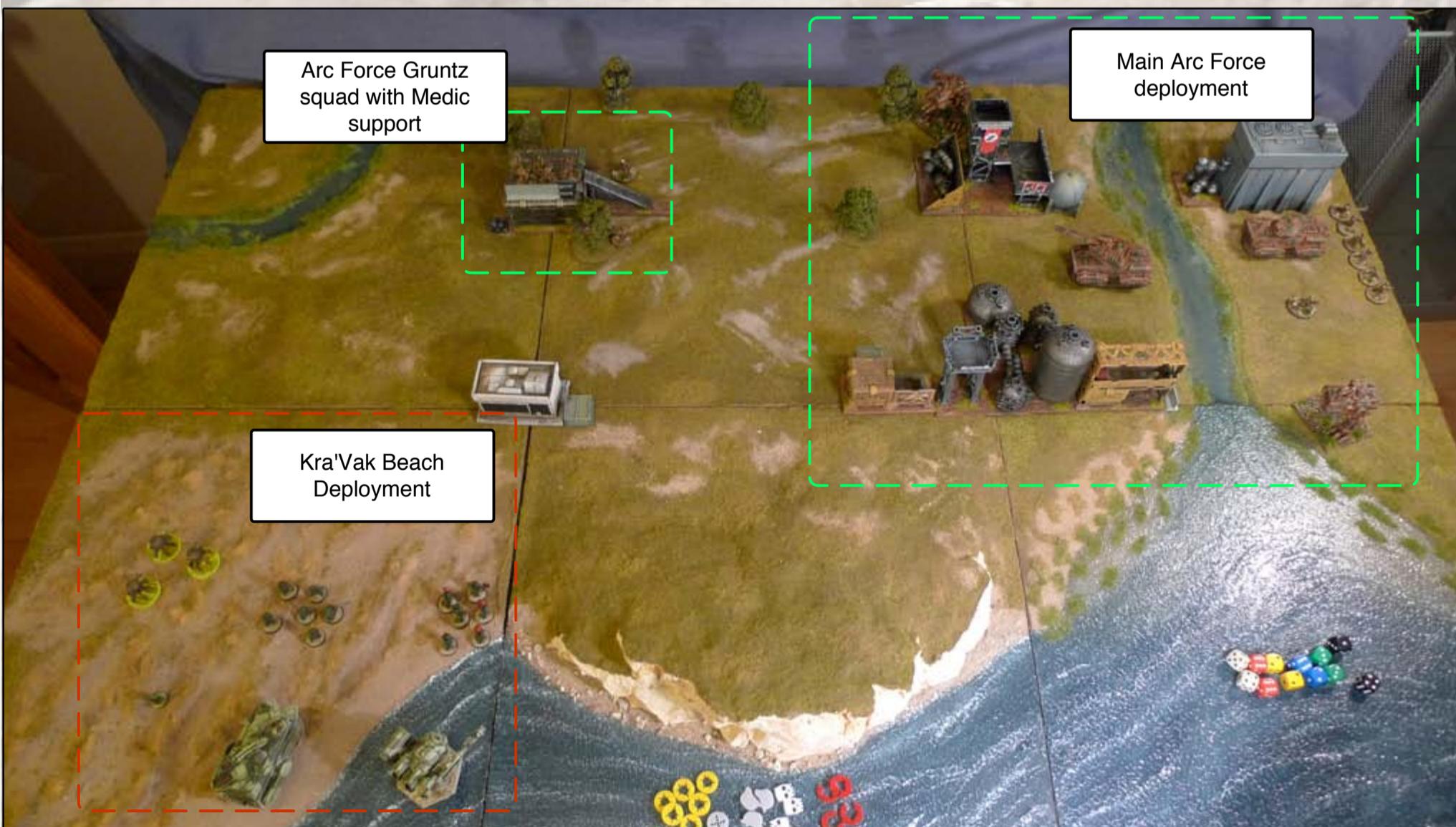
which have a chance to remove the waxed condition counter (the skulls in the battlereport photos) before the squad is activated. Medics are specialists, acting on their own activation which enables them to dash to help a waxed gruntz squad model before it dies.

SCENARIO - PLANETFALL

A first contact mission for the Kra'Vak force in the system of Beta Hyrdri on the planet New Goliath. The Arc troopers alerted by the sea based landing of a Kra'Vak expeditionary force in a systems vehicle class drop ship are called to the outskirts of a coastal refinery to defend against the incoming Kra'Vak forces.

Commander Joran Lopek is on mission to offer a clear defense but also to judge the strength of Kra'Vak technology and to rapidly withdraw to minimize casualties if the engagement turns against him.

The Kra'Vak commander Koloth is instructed to clear the beach head and hold the position, enabling the logistics supply to get a foot hold on the beach.





OSCAR'S KRA'VAK FORCES

Miniatures by Ground Zero Games (GZG.com)

Kravak Strike Skimmer - Piloted by Fel Garn

Kravak Heavy Grav Tank

Kravak Powered Armour Squad (6 Gruntz, 2 with Micro Missile shoulder mount pods).

Spider Droids (3 with Shields and Laser weapons). Very accurate and hard to initially penetrate the armour.

Kravak Gruntz Squad : Consisting of 5 Guntz and a Squad Leader

Commander Lopek

ROBIN'S ARC TROOPER FORCES

Miniatures by Critical Mass Games (Criticalmassgames.com)

Gruntz Squad A: consisting of 5 Gruntz and a Squad Leader (All Statistics the same).

Gruntz Squad B: consisting of 5 Gruntz and a Squad Leader (All Statistics the same).

ARC Medium Grav APC

ARC Medium Grav Tank

ARC Light Scout Mecha Walker

ARC Light Missile Mecha Walker

Commander Koloth

Medic Specialist Unit



TERRAIN SET UP

The terrain boards were setup with a basic coastal layout and a few areas of terrain and buildings to provide cover. For this game report we used a small 90x60cm modular terrain layout. The Arc troop forces were mo

TURN 1 - INITIATIVE.

This game we played the I go, You go basic activation. In Gruntz the activation sequence can be varied with the advanced playing card or alternating squad activation. When I play my son Oscar I normally stick to I go, You go activation because the game moves more quickly and has been easier for him to learn the basics of movement and damage resolution.

Rather than take turns to deploy units we simply pre-placed the Arc troopers in defensive positions with the Kra'Vak landing in the beach area.

I rolled my 2D6 initiative roll and scored 6, Oscar also rolled 6 + his Kra'Vak commander skill of 5 but I had 1 extra point of Commander skill, so I my total of the roll of 6 + a Commander skill of 6 gave me the first activation.

TURN 1 - ARC FORCE

Unit Actions (order of unit activation selected by player)

1: The Scout Mecha Walker

Makes a double flank speed move of 12 inches along the coast, aiming to bring some initial firepower to the flank of the landing Kra'Vak forces.

2: Missile Mecha Walker

Moves 6 inches and fires missile pods on the Kra'Vak powered armour. The attack missies and the missiles deviate totally off-target.

3: Arc Grav Tank

Moves 4 inches and fires rail gun at long range at the Kra'Vak strike skimmer and misses.

4: Commander Lopek

Move 4 inches, staying in cover.

5: Grav APC with 1 Gruntz squad carried

Moves 12 inches past buildings, taking care not to engage the troops.

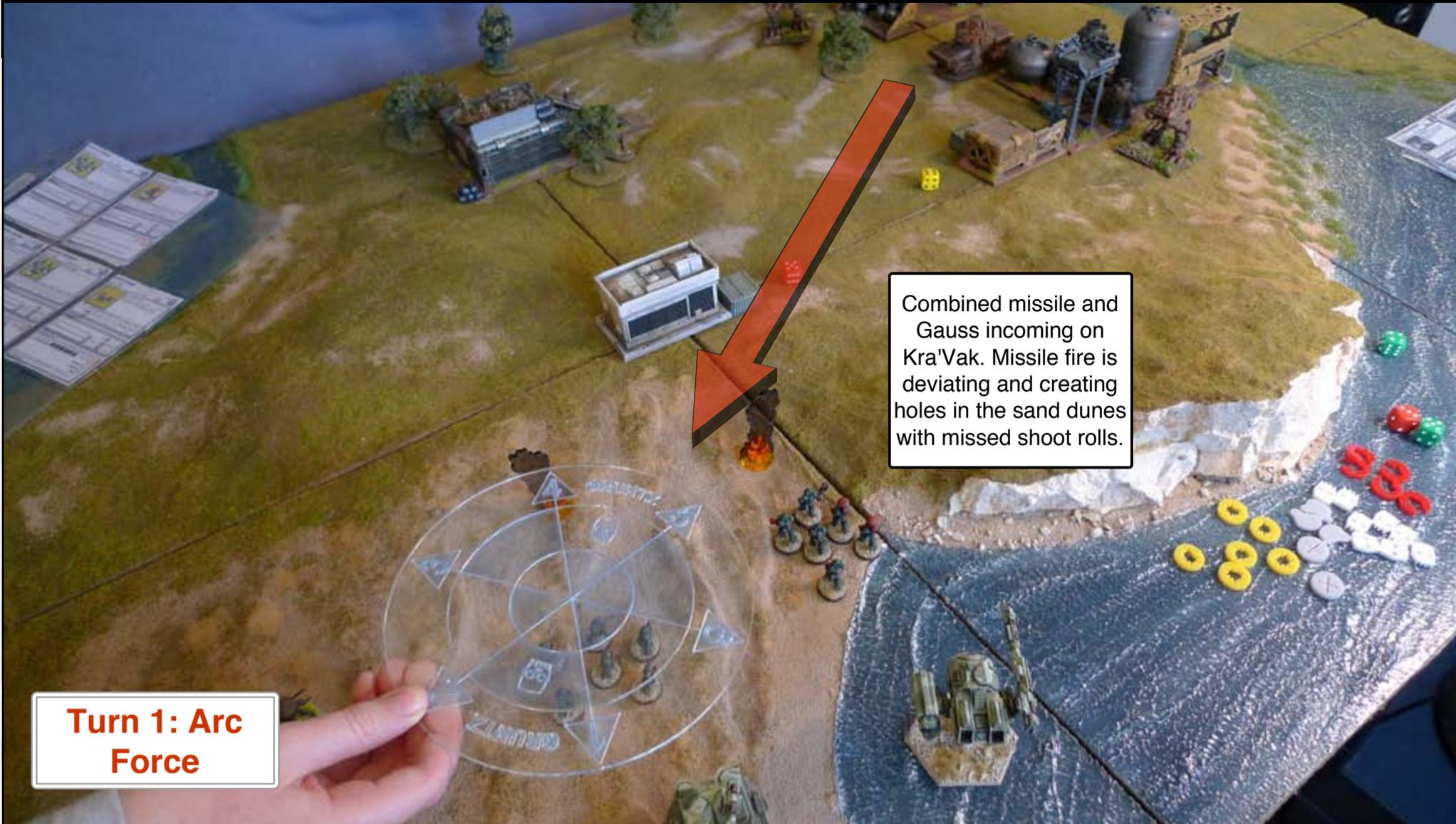
6: Gruntz Squad A on roof top

Fire at long range at Kra'Vak squad but fail to hit.



Turn 1: Arc
Force

Arc Force tentative
push forward to engage
Kra'Vak



Combined missile and Gauss incoming on Kra'Vak. Missile fire is deviating and creating holes in the sand dunes with missed shoot rolls.

Turn 1: Arc Force

TURN 1 - KRA'VAK

Unit Actions (order of unit activation selected by player)

1: Spider Droids

Move 7 inches and fire on Arc Gruntz squad A on roof top. Two manage to hit and do enough damage to Wax 2 Gruntz. The Arc troop unit is now also in suppressed condition. When they next activate they will only get one action rather than 2 and will also lose two Gruntz

unless a medic can reach them before they activate.

2: Kra'Vak Strike Skimmer

Moves 6 inches and fires missile pods on the Kra'Vak powered armour. The attack missies and the missiles deviate totally off-target.

3: Arc Grav Tank

Pilot Fel Garn takes the high speed Kra'Vak skimmer along the coast and makes a pop up attack over the cliff. A hit with missile fire against the Arc light walker causes considerable damage and it has two critical system box's filled on the damage grid. A critical systems check is made by the Arc mecha walker, both Armour and Tek pass OK but it sustains engine critical damage. On the its next activation the mecha walker will no longer be able to make a double flank move due to the engine failure.

The Kra'Vak Strike Skimmer is fast and light, not able to take much damage but the combined rail gun and missile pods make it ideal for rapid deep strikes.



Oscar moving the well shielded Spider Droids to take a snipe at the rooftop Arc Troopers.

Turn 1: Kra'Vak

4: Powered Armour

The mighty Kra'Vak in powered armour move 4 inches and fire on the already damaged scout walker which is totaled by the two powered armour shoulder mounted missile pods.

At this point the Arc player realises that early commitment of the scout walker was probably not a good move, especially when the Kra'Vak were rolling high.

5: Kra'Vak Gruntz

Double move 8 inches to cover behind a small building in the dunes.

6: Commander Koloth

Double move into cover with Gruntz squad.

7: Grav Tank

Moves 8 inches and fires on Gruntz squad but misses.



Turn 1: END

TURN 2 - ARC FORCE**1: Missile Mecha Walker**

Fires missile on spider droid and destroys one droid with more than 4 damage through the soak and shield.

2: Medic

Moves up to roof top and heals 1 Grunt.

3: Gruntz Squad on rooftop

Concentrate fire on one single Spider droid, overloading the shield and doing 3 damage. The spider droid is now down to one damage block but could choose to re-energise its shield next turn if it takes no other action.

4: Grav Tank

Fires on Kra'Vak tank. A hit but a very low damage roll results in only 3 damage through the soak of the Kra'Vak heavy armour.

5: Commander Lopek

Double moves to get closer to the battle.

6: Grav APC

Double moves to support the Arc squad on the roof top.



Medic races up the ramp and heals two waxed squad members. Squad is still Suppressed, so marker is left in place.

Turn 2: Arc Force

TURN 2 - KRA'VAK



Strike Skimmer continues to flank passing the flaming wreckage of the scout mecha.

Turn 2: Kra'Vak

1: Spider droids

The two remaining droids fire on the exposed Gruntz in soft cover beside the roof top. Two Gruntz are waxed and the entire squad is now in suppressed condition. The droids did not move, so they benefit from +1 to shooting rolls.

2: Kra'Vak Gruntz Squad

Fire in pairs, using concentrated fire against the roof top Arc troopers. They benefit from a +1 to shoot and damage rolls due to concentrated fire. 2 Further Arc troopers are waxed.

3: Powered Armour

Move 4 inches and fire both micro missiles at Arc Tank for a total of 3 more damage.

4: Kra'Vak commander.

Makes a double move to cover near the Kra'Vak Gruntz squad.

5: Kra'Vak Grav Tank

Does not move and fires on Arc tank doing a further 3 damage with its Gauss canon on a low roll.

6: Strike Skimmer

Makes a double move of 18 inches along coast, the start of a flanking maneuver.



Turn 2: END

Arc forces are pushing out to meet Kra'Vak. APC moving to support Arc Rifle Squad A.

TURN 3: ARC FORCE**1: Medic**

Moves down slope from the top of the building and heals 2 Gruntz previously waxed.

2: Arc Rifle Squad on roof.

Activate and fire on Kra'Vak Gruntz squad hitting three and waxing 2. Kra'Vak squad now suppressed.

3: Arc Rfile RPG Squad Attachment

Fires RPG at Spider Droid. Scratch one droid.

4: Grav Tank

Fires and hits Kra'Vak tank but rolls a terrible low damage roll of 3 not penetrating the soak of the heavily armoured vehicle. Anti infantry fire from it's auto rifle waxes one squad member of the Kra'Vak Gruntz squad.

5: Commander

Double move to cover.

6: Grav APC: moves six to provide a location to drop its carried Gruntz squad.

7: Arc Squad B:

disembark the APC (all placed within 4inches). For their second action they fire on the Kra'Vak squad and wax one squad member.

8: Missile Mecha:

Takes a shot at the Kra'Vak tank but misses with snake eyes.



Turn 3: Arc Force

Arc Rifle Troops deploy from the Grav APC to push the attack.

TURN 3: KRA'VAK "WHEN THE BATTLE TURNED"

1: Spider Droid

Last remaining droid fires on the newly deployed Arc Squad B and waxes one.

2: Strike Skimmer

Moves into position to the rear of the Arc Grav tank. Fires missiles and gains benefit from +2 damage in rear armour. Rolls poorly on damage roll but manages to land 4 points of damage.

3: Powered Armour squad.

Fire two micro missiles on tank and lands 3 total damage, enough to fill in a critical box. 1 roll for critical systems damage and lose the armour system. The Grav tank is now -4 soak due to the armour critical.

Remaining Powered armour squad now make use of their auto-rifles. With the Grav tank -4 on Soak they stand a chance of landing some damage on the tank with the lower powered rifles. They concentrate fire with 4 squad members firing together and land 4 more damage enough to total the Arc Grav tank.

4: Grav Tank

Fires both weapon systems on the nearly crippled Missile walker and totals it. The three significant vehicles of the Arc force are now all out of action.

5: Commander

He activates and uses one of his two actions as a "Take the Pain" action on the remaining

two Kra'Vak Gruntz. This allows him to remove the suppression condition from the Kra'Vak, so they are to take two actions on activation.

6: Gruntz Squad

Squad concentrate fire on the Arc trooper squad A and wax one squad member.



Turn 3: Arc Force

Arc Rifle Troops deploy from the Grav APC to push the attack.

TURN 4 : ARC FORCE "RAPID RETREAT!"

1: Squad B

Re-embark into the APC, loosing the waxed casualty.

2: Grav APC

Activates and makes a double flank move back toward the Arc force deployment zone in an attempt to evac the last surviving Gruntz squad in one piece.

3: Commander

Double moves toward incoming APC to make use of cover.

4: Medic

Leaving behind the remains of Arc Squad A on the rooftop, the medic double moves to follow the APC.

5: Arc Squad A.

Making a last stand they fire on the last remaining spider droid with the Squad Attachment RPG and total it. Finally a cheer from the squad as they also wax the last Kra'vak squad members but with no support left they await their fate at the hands of the remaining Kra'vak. Lets hope the rumors about trophy skull collectors are just mess-room banter.

TURN 4: KRA'VAK "FINAL PUSH"

1: Strike Skimmer

Moves and takes a missile shot at the retreating Arc Grav APC. It misses

2: Grav Tank

Moves 4 inches to slight hill top and fires on the Arc APC. 8 damage is through and enough to force a critical systems check. Fortunately I succeed on the rolls and APC does not lose a major system but is seriously damaged.

3: Powered Armour

Move 4 inches and use the two micro missiles to further damage the APC. This time it fails a critical check on Armour and is now very vulnerable to all Kra'vak incoming fire with its Soak at -4.

4: Kra'vak Commander

Allows himself a slight moment of gloating before reporting the success of his beach head attack to.



Minor Victory for the left behind Arc Riflemen. A cheer over the narrow-beam net link! The last spider droid falls to RPG fire.

TURN 5: ARC FORCE "TACTICAL WITHDRAWAL AND SURRENDER"

- 1: Commander embarks the APC.
- 2: APC smokes off the board, exiting the field of battle.
- 3: Remanning three Gruntz on the rooftop lay down weapons and await their fate as POW's.



TURN 5: KRA'VAK

KRA'VAK

VICTORY!



What we learned

Fel Garn the pilot of the strike skimmer will be honored for his primary bold attack along the coast which was a devastating early blow against the Arc forces when he delivered crippling damage on the Arc scout mecha. Fel followed his primary attack with a smart **flanking** maneuver which made use of the high speed of the strike skimmer resulting in a significant advantage during the end game of Turn 5.

Arc moral was low after seeing the mecha walker destroyed on turn one and combined with miserable rolling throughout we suffered at the hands of the Kra'Vak. In retrospect it would have been safer to concentrate forces to the rear and wait for the Kra'Vak to approach before deploying the walkers into the main field and massing fire on the exposed Kra'Vak forces.

The Medic performed admirably for the Arc gruntz pulling a couple of squad members back from the brink but ultimately had to withdraw when the approaching Kra'Vak had clearly turned the battle. A major lesson was never to leave powered armour free to roam and make use of the anti-armour capability of their two missile weapons. The missiles on powered armour are still the personal type but enough to turn the battle as their extra points of damage could cause a critical on target vehicles.

Initially this feels like an easy win for the Kra'Vak, however as the Arc player I was rolling very badly and made a poor early choice of spreading my two Mecha and primary Grav tank across the field and not concentrating fire on the Kra'Vak vehicles. I did at least make a mostly elegant and rapid exit in the Grav APC when the battle was clearly lost.

HEAVY GEAR BLITZ!

**A locked and loaded
review
by Spencer D Taylor**

I'm a man who's not afraid to admit his biases when it comes to gaming, and one of those biases of mine involves miniatures in small scales. I understand that smaller scale games may be better suited to represent larger scale battles, but I'm just not sold on it. I'm just dead-set in my ways with 28mm gaming. It may also have something to do with the fact that that my painting skills are barely passable at 28mm, and the prospect of painting anything smaller is absolutely terrifying to me. However, if there's one thing that smaller scale games really represent perfectly for me, it's my one true love; giant robots.

Everyone knows Battletech, but there's a little known gem out of Canada from a

company called Dream Pod 9 and the game they call Heavy Gear Blitz.

First, here is a short history lesson for you. Heavy Gear as a setting, and even a game, is nothing new; the first Heavy Gear game came out in the mid 1990's. Originally Heavy Gear was released as a RPG with optional rules for tactical miniatures combat using hex maps and paper counters. The game got re-released as Heavy Gear Blitz in 2006 as solely a tactical miniatures game with a whole new line of miniatures to go with it. The game is listed as 1/144 scale, which is roughly 10-12mm, with the main robot miniatures you'll be using being closer to 28mm tall. This has drawn me to the game, since the tiny models, like infantry, are entirely optional when you can take robots and tanks. This obviously ticks one of my boxes, my painting doesn't look any worse than normal.



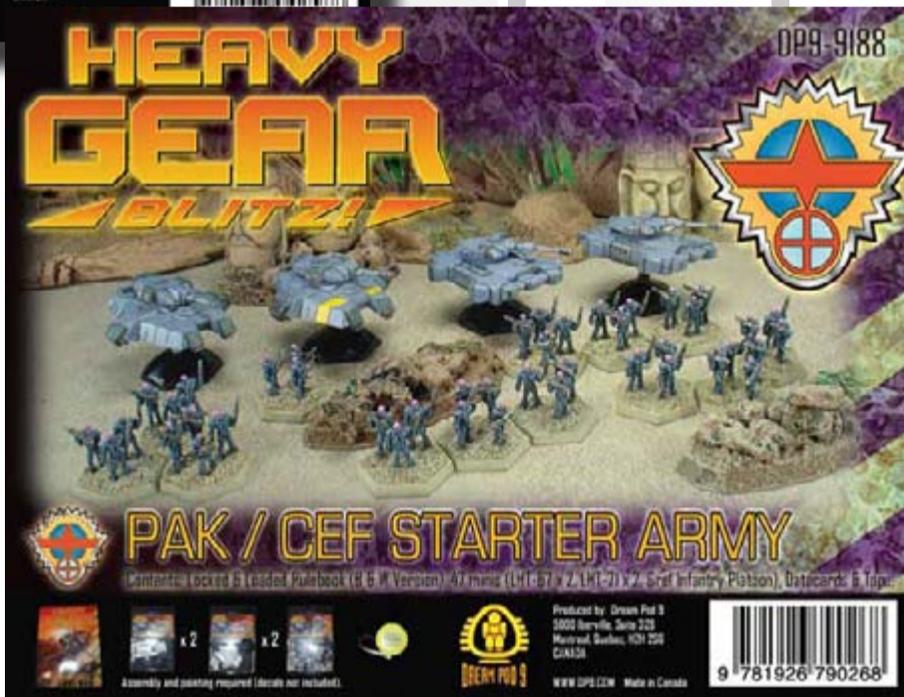
Heavy Gear is set on the distant colony world of Terra Nova sometime in the 52nd century. The planet has lush poles where the two major powers, the Confederated Northern City-States and the Allied Southern Territories, sit at near constant war. The badlands are a huge band of nearly inhospitable mountain ranges and deserts which stretch all the way around the equator of the planet. The powerful Paxton Arms, a large weapons manufacturing company, sits here on Peace River with their personal army;



South went back to their usual conflicts with each other over resources in the badlands and control of territory.



the Peace River Defense Force (PRDF). The planet and its colonists were abandoned 500 years after establishment by the Earth government, who returned later to try and reclaim their colonies in the form of the Colonial Expeditionary Force (CEF). After a defeat at the hands of the North and South with back-up from Paxton Arms the remnants of the CEF forces on Terra Nova, after being abandoned by their superiors, settled and established their own base of power in Port Arthur. After the war with the CEF the North and



Heavy Gear has a rich and deep setting with lots of political intrigue and other such things. In addition to the initial fluff in the main rulebook, there are a number of other publications that adds new layers and

opens up more options once you are past the initial learning curve, but more on that later.

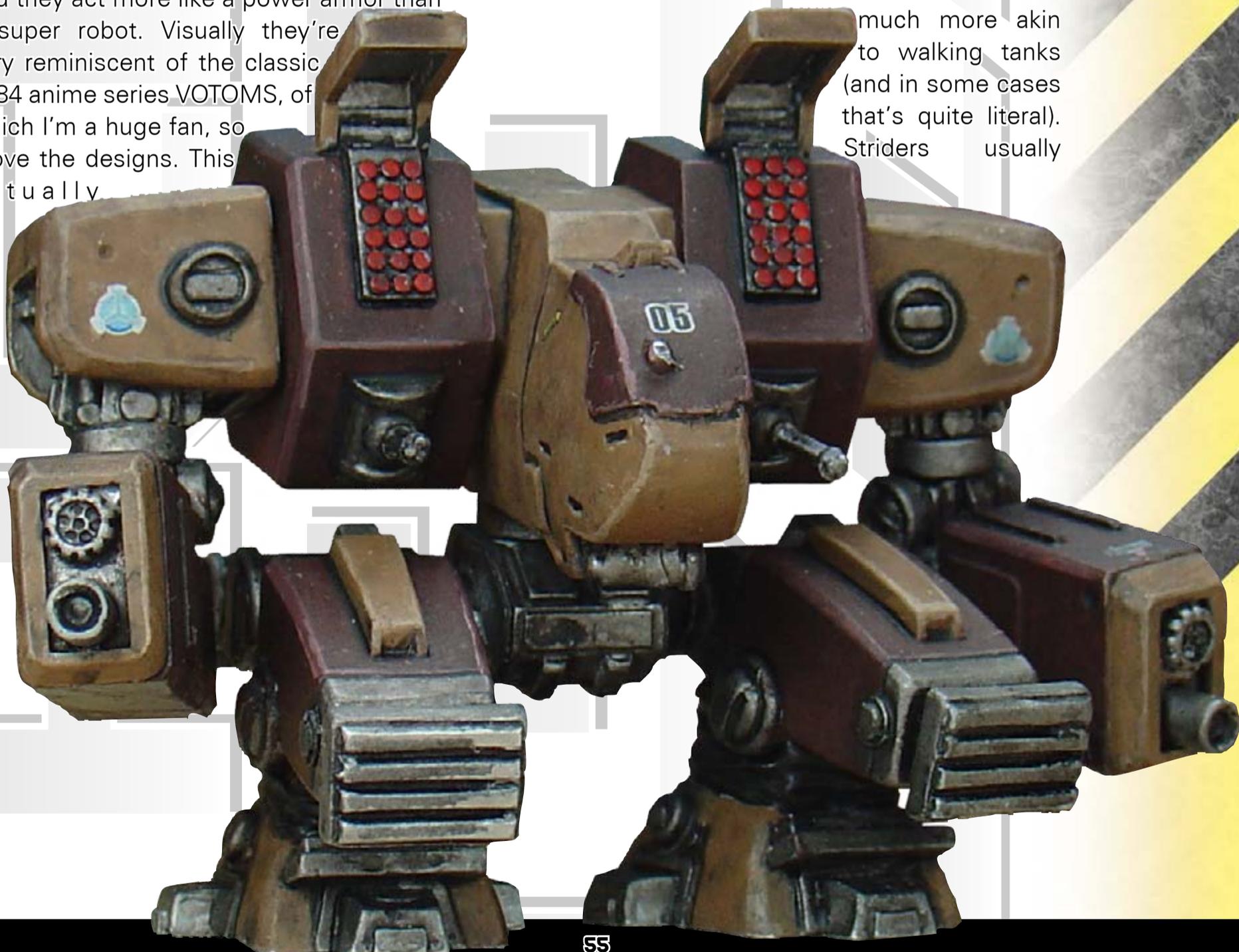
The Gears, as they're called, aren't your average



giant robots in the sense of something like Battletech or Gundam.

A Gear is only, on average, between 12 and 18 feet tall as opposed to being several stories tall, and they act more like a power armor than a super robot. Visually they're very reminiscent of the classic 1984 anime series VOTOMS, of which I'm a huge fan, so I love the designs. This actually

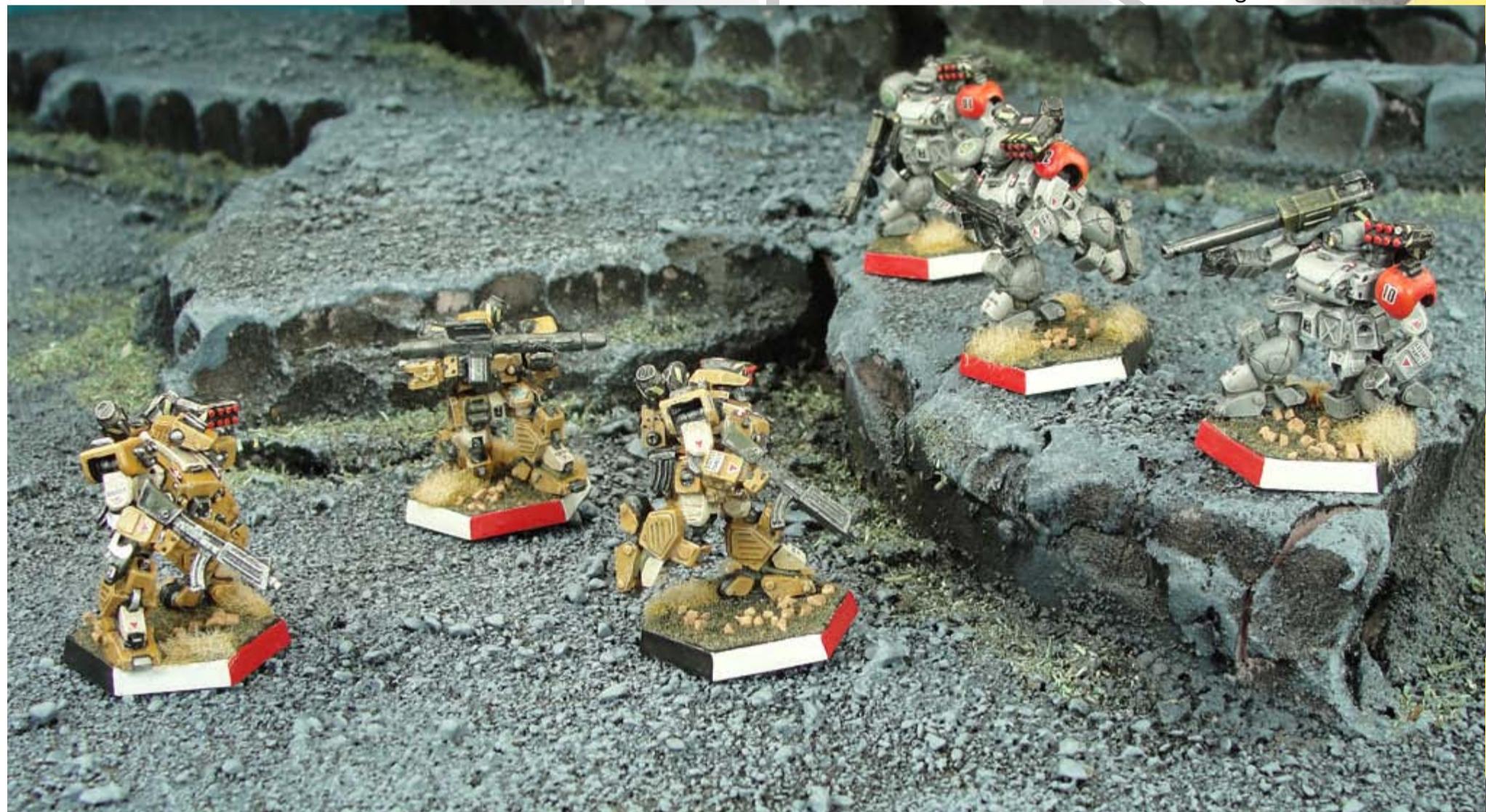
ends up giving Heavy Gear its very own unique visual style compared to its competition in the market, and being able to set yourself apart is a good thing. There are bigger things on the battlefield in the form of Striders, which are much more akin to walking tanks (and in some cases that's quite literal). Striders usually



offer long distance support and cover fire rather than act like front line soldiers.

Enough of the fluff, we're here to talk about the game, so if you are all sitting comfortably let us begin. Heavy Gear Blitz as a game is very solid with a really well done set of rules. The rules are actually pretty simple in principle, but reading the rules straight through, as I've done several times now, they can be a bit daunting and I got a bit confused. They don't go into as much detail as I would have liked, and some more examples of things would be much appreciated. An example is talking about Margin of Success and Margin of Failure. This is the key mechanic of attacking

the Margin of Success or Failure depending on who wins the roll. For example, I attack with a model with an attack value of 2 and the target has a defense of 2. We'll say I have a -1 modifier for range and the defender has a -2 modifier for movement (I'll get into that later). So we roll our dice and I roll a 6 and a 3, and he rolls a 4 and a 5. After modifiers my highest roll is a 5 and his is a 3. So I win with a Margin of Success of 2. It's actually a pretty basic concept and an easy to get mechanic, but the book lacks an example, even one as simple as I just gave you. However fear not, the quick start rules available on the website give an example of how it works and it may be wise to have a look at this first in order to get



and doing damage so it seems a little odd that the details seem so lacking.

The way combat works is that you roll the number of dice equal to your attacking model's attack value and your opponent rolls a number of dice equal to the target's defense value. If the attacker rolls higher than the defender (roll all the dice and take the single highest) then they succeed. This is of course changed by modifiers and the likes, which will affect the end result. The difference between the two numbers is either

into the game before attempting the advanced rules in the main rulebook.

One of the tactical things about the game is that each model has a number of actions it can take during its turn. Things that require you to use a model's action include attacking with a weapon, moving full speed, special abilities and other such things. This takes me back to my old days with Mutant Chronicles Warzone, and unlike Warzone I feel like it works really well here. Your average model will only have a single action with some of the bigger models having more although nothing

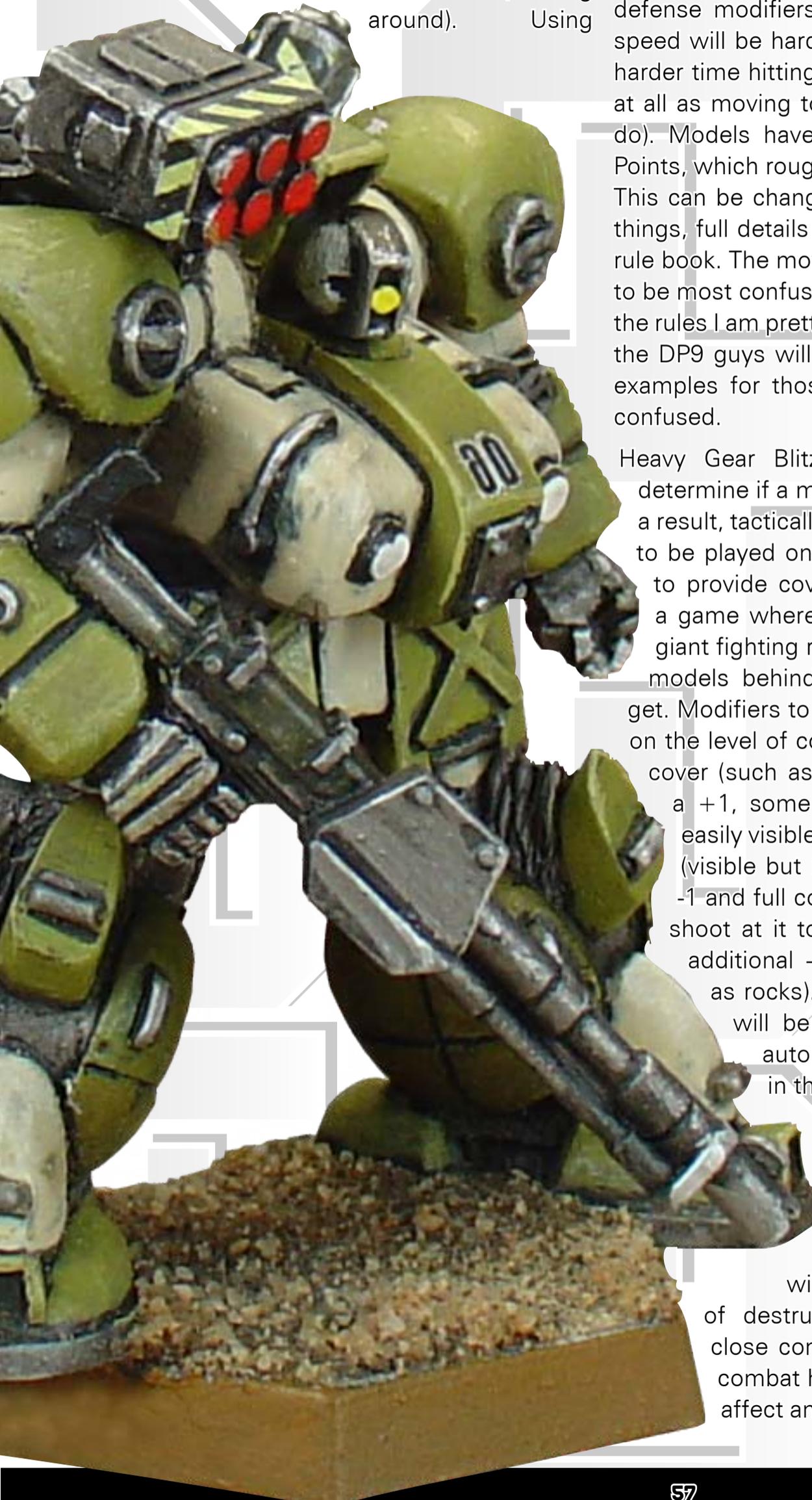
in the core rule book goes above 3 actions.

To me, movement is perhaps the most interesting mechanic in this game. Gears have two options for movement; ground (or wheeled/tracked movement) or walker (walking around). Using

different movement types have different rules which determine how you move your models. There are also three speeds per a movement type; stationary, combat or top speed. Based on the speed a model moves they'll have attack and defense modifiers, so a model moving at top speed will be harder to hit, but will also have a harder time hitting you (provided they can shoot at all as moving top speed costs and action to do). Models have what are called Movement Points, which roughly translate to 1MP = 1 inch. This can be changed by terrain and other such things, full details of which are of course in the rule book. The movement rules are what I found to be most confusing but with a few readings of the rules I am pretty sure I have it now. Hopefully the DP9 guys will come up with some simpler examples for those of us who are dazed and confused.

Heavy Gear Blitz uses true line-of-sight to determine if a model is visible for attack so as a result, tactically it is a game that really needs to be played on a board with lots of scenery to provide cover. This might seem odd for a game where the primary combatants are giant fighting robots, but you'll want to keep models behind cover at every chance you get. Modifiers to attack rolls are applied based on the level of cover the target model has; no cover (such as a model out in the open) is a +1, some cover (half covered but still easily visible) has no modifier, partial cover (visible but more than 50% covered) is a -1 and full cover means you can't see it to shoot at it to begin with. There's also an additional -1 if the cover is solid (such as rocks). This means that using cover will be a good idea, but it doesn't automatically mean that standing in the open is a death wish either.

The Combat system is pretty straightforward in concept though you do need to take a lot of other aspects into consideration. Shooting will be the primary method of destruction for your models, but close combat is still possible. Ranged combat has a plethora of things which affect and modify your roll; movement





speed, cover, weapon type, and range. Each ranged weapon has 5 ranges listed: point blank, short, medium, long and extreme. To even be able to attack an enemy model they must be within your extreme range distance, but the range band they fall in will apply more modifiers to your attacks. Point blank is +1 to your attack roll, short is no modifier, medium is a -1, long is a -2 and extreme is a -3. The thing is that the ranges themselves are very short; a medium autocannon (a pretty standard assault rifle type weapon for gears) has a short range of 9 inches, and a medium of 18. This means that between 9 and 18 inches you'll be getting a -1 on your attack roll. Guns also have an accuracy modifier, which is a permanent modifier to the attack despite everything else. The most basic weapons will have either a 0 or a -1 modifier, while some may

be even less accurate than that and some others may actually have a positive modifier. This means that if you want to effectively hit your target you're going to need to get up close and personal with them. Just when you thought it was safe to open fire there are a few other things that you need to factor into your plans. Firing Arcs, ammunition, rate of fire and types of weapons to name but a few. I don't want to spoil the journey of discovery but all of these, to me at least, add a sense of drama to the game. You can try to shoot your foes from a distance and hope the dice gods are your friends that day, or you can rush in with guns blazing and try to get every positive modifier the game will offer you. Bring it on, I say.

Of course when push comes to shove you can always just resort to close combat and impale your enemy on the business end of a car sized sword. Close combat in Heavy Gear Blitz can be brutal and dangerous. Model size plays heavily into close combat, as a bonus is given to the attacker or defender if they're of a greater size than their foe.

All of this said, the end goal of combat is to damage the enemy and this is done by simply taking the Margin of Success and multiplying it by the weapon's damage value and hoping you match or exceed your target's armor value. Let's say after all rolling is done I have a Margin of Success of 3 and my weapon has a damage value of x8. So after some simple math we get a result of 24, so now we check the target's armor value. We'll use the North's Grizzly for this example with its armor score of 18. So I've dealt 1-damage to the Grizzly with my attack. If you are able to double their armor you deal 2-damage, and if you're able to exceed their armor score by three times then the model is outright destroyed.

I have covered mostly Gear related combat, but I just want to be clear that there are other units

available in this game including tanks, Striders and infantry. I focused mostly on Gear-on-Gear violence because I feel that the giant robot battles are the main draw of the game, and because Gears are the primary models used in the game. There are a lot of other optional rules for the game including communication events, and

instead of having a set army organization you will adhere to every game you can mix things up not only by using different models, but by changing your Priority Level as well. The best part about the whole Priority Level thing is that it's almost purely fluff. The whole thing is supposed to be an abstract representation of how valuable high command considers the mission or the soldiers they're willing to send to a combat zone. It is little touches like this that put a smile on my face.

Heavy Gear Blitz is not relegated to simply its main rulebook (entitled *Locked & Loaded*); Dream Pod 9 has produced three campaign expansion books which can be used with the main rules. These books are "Black Talon: Return to Cat's Eye" and volumes one and two of "The War for Terra Nova." These books add new forces to the fight, expand on other forces (such as the CEF), and add new optional rules. Above all that they advance the changing plot of the setting,

morale, and similar to other games you can, if your opponent agrees, try adding these in one at a time. This helps with the longevity of the game and the master game player will be someone familiar with all of these subtleties.

One of the most unique aspects of Heavy Gear Blitz, in my opinion, is army building. Like most other games you set a point level for army building (which in this game is called the Threat Value), but where it differs is in something called Priority Level. There are four levels to the Priority Level and it's what actually determines how you'll build your army as it states how many units from each category (core, specialist, auxiliary, elite) you can take in your force. The Priority Level and Threat Level are in no way connected to each other, though, so you can build an army at any point level in any Priority Level. This means in a 2,000 point game it's entirely possible for one side to be at Priority Level 1 and then other to be at Priority Level 4. This adds a whole new level to army building since





and are actually supposed to be played in order of "Black Talon" and then the "War for Terra Nova" books. This way you don't skip over some big part of the fluff and are left wondering what happened. There's also another book entitled "Operation: Drop bears Dive" which covers a specific unit called the Drop Bears and adds rules for using them in the game. The nice part about these books is that even if you buy them to see how the story progresses is that they're more or less source books like you get in most RPGs. There's also several art books and even army specific source books, but unlike army books in other games these are entirely optional as the main reason to grab them is for the fluff.

What's great is that all of the books are available in digital format via DriveThruRPG. In fact the only ones available from Dream Pod 9 in physical print are the main rule book, Black Talon and the two War for Terra Nova books. This is nice since it's generally easier to carry a flash drive with books on it than actual physical copies of books. But the books essential to play are all available in printed format, so that's what really counts.

The last thing that Dream pod 9 really won me over with is the amount of free content on their website. They have a section of downloadable



material for things like army building guides (the Priority Levels), all the data cards for the various units, paper terrain, Errata and other such things. Perhaps the biggest one is something I mentioned earlier; free quick start rules. These are the basics that I've outlined here and they are entirely free. You can buy a box of Gears and use those quick start rules to get a hang of the basics before diving on into the main rule book. This is something I think every game should have available because some people want to just try a game before dropping money on a rulebook, and they may not have access to someone willing to give them a demo.

Before you all go off and start playing Heavy Gear Blitz I want to say something about the price of getting into the game. This is not a cheap game to start up. The average box of five Gears will run you anywhere from \$40 USD to \$50 USD based

on the models. The models are metal so that's a part of it, but it's still a bit tough to swallow sometimes. Each army also has a starter box available for \$110 (except the CEF which is \$115) which comes with two boxes of models, a black and white copy of the rulebook, data cards and a measuring tape. In the end the starter sets are a good deal for what you get. There is the option, however, of a two player starter set that Dream Pod 9 recently released. This box, called "The Interpolar War Begins," consist of a North general purpose squad and a South general purpose cadre, a black and white copy of the rules, data cards and measuring tape. This is a great deal at \$100 USD, and it's a great way for two people to get started on a fantastic game. The big thing about this game is that you can play it effectively with only 4 squads of models on the table.

HEAVY GEAR BLITZ!

DP9-9200

THE INTERPOLAR WAR BEGINS

Two Player Starter Kit: Includes Locked & Loaded Rulebook (B & W Version), 10 minis (North and South G.P. Squads), Databooks & Measuring Tape.

Produced by: Dream Pod 9
5000 Iberville, Suite 328
Montreal, Quebec, H3H 2S6
CANADA

WWW.DP9.COM Made in Canada

9 781926 790398

Assembly and painting required (decals not included).

Taking everything into consideration this is a fantastic game with a rich background. The rules can seem a bit confusing at times and be a little hard to follow, but they're quite solid. I suggest taking a look at the quick start rules first and getting well acquainted with those before jumping into the big rule book. If you can get past the price then you'll find a fantastic game with absolutely beautiful models. If you like mecha and miniatures games then this is the game for you. And hey; if the battlefields of Terra Nova aren't quite your thing there's always the Arenas but that's another story for another day. . . .

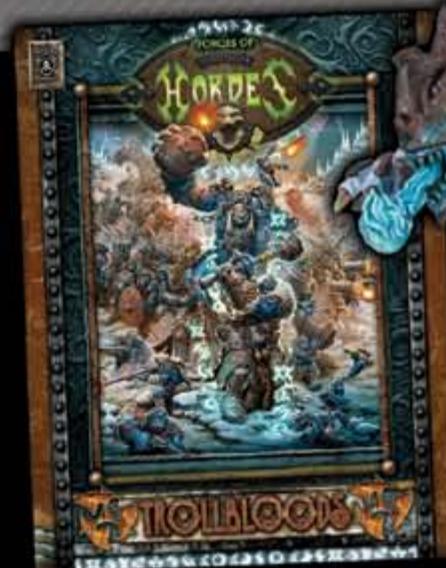


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Infinity Miniatures Review

by
Jez
Fairclough



February New releases



Carlota Kowalsky & Moriarty (Combi Rifle + Light FT).

New release! The Tomcats' special character has arrived! And not alone! As usual, her loyal and always battle-damaged Zondcat, Moriarty, is with her. Carlota Kowalsky is the best operator of the Tomcat special unit, not only capable to repair anything but also to stop the heaviest foes with her Adhesive-Launcher. The Nomad players can breathe again, this daring duo has come to save the day!



Order Sergeants (Combi Rifle).

The Order Sergeants are the core of the PanOceania Military Orders, experienced soldiers that supports the aggressive actions of the armoured knights. Now you can increase your number of this useful troop with this blister which compiled the figures previously released in the Military Order Sectorial Starter Pack. Fight in the name of God and PanOceania with the Order Sergeants!

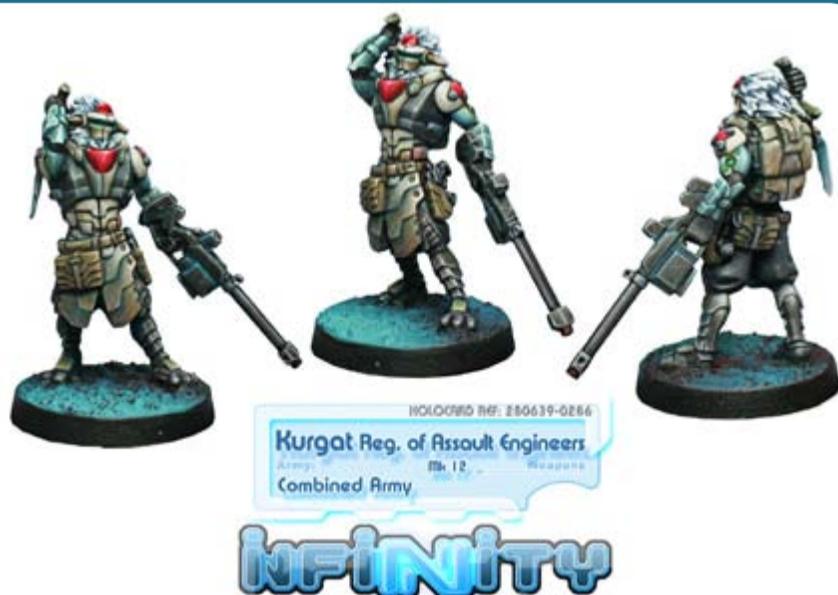


Oniwaban Shinobu Kitsune (Monofilament CCW).

New release! Shinobu Kitsune, the Oniwaban special character, is proudly released with two different pair of arms, so the player can choose which pose he likes more. Many people has talked about this ghostly ninja, but nobody has seen her. Finally the legendary Shinobu Kitsune materializes in the game table and her adversaries will deplore the moment this sexy stealth killing machine appeared!

Highlander Caterans (T2 Sniper Rifle).

New release! The Caterans are discredited clan warriors who have become bandits and highwaymen. They take advantage from their Limited Camouflage Special Skill to ambush their targets from hidden positions. A single Cateran can immobilize an entire enemy force thanks to their powerful long range sniper rifle loaded with T2 Special Ammunition. Moreover, this release comes with an amazing scenery base, but if you only want it just to play you can build it on a small round base. And don't forget the Caterans can be hired as mercenaries too!



Kurgat, Reg. Of Assault Engineers (Mk12).

New release! The Kurgat are the Assault Engineers of the Morat forces. Honoring the legendary Morat tradition of violence, they are more specialized in to make explode enemies and to clear the path of hostile forces rather than to repair things. Armed with the Mk12, the Kurgat can cover the medium-long range of the battlefield with potent firepower. Do you want to know where are the Kurgats in the battlefield? Just follow the sound of the explosions.

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We Try Building Something

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