RACK & RUNE

RACK & RUNE #9: Remember SPI!

It may be something to do with the weather, but the local gaming world does seem to be picking up speed — or maybe it's just me. As I get older, things seem to move faster ... let's see someone make a game mechanic for that.

FROM THE CLOSED SHELVES

It's taken me quite a few issues to bring in this feature, but I had planned to include it in R&R from the first. There are so many wonderful books out there; I've read a lot of them, and often end up searching for years to find my own copy. Far too many of them have simply disappeared, no longer in print and rarely seen even in the best used bookstores. In some cases, I've been forced to resort to the Boston Public Library.

"From the Closed Shelves" will include books that could provide inspiration for role-playing games/campaigns, books that might stimulate ideas about gaming and gaming philo-sophy, and books that have nothing to do with gaming at all. It may even include 'books' that are not really books at all.

Lord Dunsany - This is not a book, it is the name of an author; it is a sad commentary on the state of English Literature that so many people today are unlikely to be familiar with his works. Baron Lord Dunsany was undoubtedly one of the major founding figures of modern fantasy. His work had particular impact upon the young H.P. Lovecraft, who imitated him for several years (this was before Lovecraft develo-ped his own more horrific style). Lord Dunsany wrote novels, plays, and books of short-shorts before there were such things.

He wrote enchantingly of strange Gods and exotic places. The sense of wonder, of an almost fairy-tale like quality that he brought to his work is rarely seen in modern works. "A Dreamer's Tales", "The Gods of Pegana", and "Fifty-one Tales" are excellent collections of his short stories to begin with. Those who prefer novels may have an easier time finding "The King of Elfland's Daughter" in used bookstores. But short stories are where Dunsany shines best.

"The God Box" 1989 by Barry B. Longyear.

Most modern fantasy seems to fall into the same dreary pattern. The details may vary, but the viewpoint is usually that of an innocent who ends up learning about the world, and does so conveniently at the end of the third book. Often such works rely heavily on what could almost be called a chronocentric/ethnocentric approach; everyone speaks and acts in accordance with modern American practices, a certain wry humor frequently manifesting. These are adventure stories, nothing more. Alternatively some newer books seem to be boosting a New Age sensibi-

lity; these usually descend into meaningless mysticism and gibberish.

"The God Box" avoids both pitfalls.

I'm tempted to leave it at that ... but I'm not that perverse. To be honest, "The God Box" is one of those books that gets to me — one of those books that I reread every so often, and find myself with a lump in the throat as I finish. Why? It's hard to say. But the book has many good qualities. It's a self-contained, single-volume fantasy work, which is extremely rare. It is extremely readable — very involving. It takes many of the standard conventions of modern fantasy, and surprises you — coming at them from a completely new angle, and dealing with mystical material without descending into mysticism. It presents philosophical ideas in such a way that I can't help but think about them — I don't buy into them buy any means (nor does that seem to be the intention of the author — this is not a tract), but I do find myself looking at things from a new perspective.

So far as I know, this is the only fantasy book written by Barry Longyear, who has written a number of science-fiction novels and short stories. I don't know if it is still in print, but it should be.

"Superstoe" 1967 by William Borden

This is one of the rarest of my books — I spent more than twelve years looking for it. I employed rare-book services of all sorts, and finally got a copy by the simple expedient of getting the book out of the Library and copying it. It is a black political comedy written in 1967 by William Borden, and is excruciatingly funny. A group of extremely eccentric geniuses decide to take over the United States and reform it — by some of the most cold-blooded and funny political tricks around. They get germs from the government, and secretly infect herds of animals with various diseases — having first prompted a pliant ex-student Senator of theirs to warn of the dangers of germ warfare. They then drug the ex-student and things proceed from there. This book is particularly interesting in its emphasis on philosophy — the ideal of the geniuses is that of

a philosopher-king. This isn't as dull as it sounds, and there are some surprising parallels with modern politics. I hate to use the word "zany" ... so I won't. But if this one doesn't get you laughing, check your pulse.

"The Sandman" written by Neil Gaiman (various illustrators)

It's often hard to know when I'm preaching to the converted — or bringing last year's news. But the "Sandman" series is something special, and I'm sure one or two people out there haven't heard of it.

It seems unfair to call "The Sandman" a comic book; graphic novel doesn't quite fit, either. In any case, it is a series of — I'll call them comics — which are quite possibly the best thing being done in the field today. It contains elements of fantasy, horror, history, and humor, and is most definitely for adults (not usually in the salacious sense, though it isn't PG-13 by any means). The "Sandman" of the title is one of the Endless, incarnations of certain ideals; these are often referred to as Destiny, Death, Dream, Desire, Despair, Delirium, and one other who was lost, but seems to have been Destruction. Need I say that the Sandman is Dream? As such he is literally the ruler of Dreaming, and a more difficult position would be hard to imagine. Both outside forces and his own younger kin (Desire & Despair) are a constant threat.

This is not a "cosmic warrior" magazine; nor is there much of a superhero element to it. In some issues Dream does not appear at all, while in others he plays a relatively minor role. If "The Sandman" were to be put into any one category, that category would probably be horror — but a horror of a more gothic vein, unlike the majority of Clive Barker-inspired trash. The driving force is atmosphere, not gore. Yet horror is only a part of the entire work. All I can say is give it a look! Only 40-odd issues are planned, and it's already into the 30's. The previous issues have been collected and released as graphic novels: among these are "Preludes and Nocturnes", "The Doll's House", and "Dream Country". Incidentally, I suspect that this would be particularly good inspiration for a
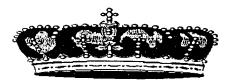
roleplaying game ...

"Kim" by Rudyard Kipling

I've often been surprised by the number of people who've never heard of "Kim". It's certainly not as well known as "The Jungle Books", and yet it is at least as good — better, in my opinion. Perhaps the reason for this is that it is less aimed at children; there are no talking animals, and the plot is comparatively complex. This greater depth only adds to the quality of the work, however.

"Kim" is a coming-of-age story of a young man in the India of the late 1800's. It captures perfectly the alien, exotic feeling of a country filled with an incredible diversity of peoples and religions, with a wealth of history unequalled elsewhere. Kipling brings India to life, and makes you wish that you could go there. The Grand Trunk Road, the high Hills of the North, the Wonder House of Lahore — all are filled with a vitality and fascination that is rarely achieved by the wildest fantasist or most detailed travelogue. And that's just the setting.

No story could be more exciting than that of young Kimball O'Hara, an orphaned son of a soldier who makes his ways through the street and across the roofs of Lahore. How he finds his destiny, and is drawn into the Great Game of power is one of the greatest stories of modern fiction. Though it's technically not science fiction or fantasy, it has a sense of wonder that can't be matched. And you'll be surprised at how many bits of it have been echoed elsewhere.

This, too, is a book that really gets to me. In case it wasn't obvious.

Looking back, I see that I may be sounding too many positive notes about the four books in this issue. All I can say is that while I may eventually end up reviewing books I didn't

like, my purpose in doing so will be to warn readers away — and I'd rather steer someone toward a book that can bring joy, instead.

RANDOM RUNEQUEST

Does an Elf who wants to commit suicide have to cast Food Song on himself?

Sorcery & Spirit

I was recently challenged on a point about RuneQuest that I'd never thought twice about before: the mixture of Sorcery, Spirit Magic, and Divine Magic in RuneQuest's Glorantha. For those unfamiliar with Glorantha, I'd always assumed that the various magics were incompatible — that mixing their use was one of the great sins of the God Learners, and that no right-thinking person would want to do so. Indeed, terrible spiritual entities were probably still searching for those who followed the God Learner path.

The dividing line was generally Sorcery, I'd thought. Divine and Spirit magic are often complementary. Each requires no learned skill to cast, and is learned from a supernatural entity (spirits for spirit magic, and Gods for Divine magic). The rational and human-taught Sorcery was antithetical to the other two approaches. To combine The Sorcery spell Damage Boosting with the Spirit spell Bladesharp on a sword, for example, would be inherently wrong, a violation of the integrity of the Cosmos. However ... why would it?

It was inevitable that a player would attempt the unimaginable, and sure enough it wasn't too long before one of my players was in a desperate situation. Faced with an implacable and hostile spirit enemy, he cast the Spirit spell Spirit Screen on himself. A melee round later, his companions cast a Sorcery Spirit Resistance on him through the mass of rocks he was trapped behind — and he accepted the spell, not knowing what it was.

What was to be done? I allowed the spells to have a cumulative effect, but decided that the mixing of magics had tainted him spiritually. His ancestors and God (Daka Fal) would see his sin

and hold him accountable.

Later, I was asked what my justification was for this ruling. To my surprise, I was unable to find any specific mention in any RuneQuest book about this. Of course, any gamemaster has the right to impose his/her own vision of the world upon a campaign, but I was still surprised — I'd been sure I'd red something. If any other RuneQuest III GMs out there have thoughts on this question, I'd like to hear them.

REVIEW: SUN COUNTY

"Sun County", the first supplement for RuneQuest III to be produced under the auspices of Ken Rolston, was a long-awaited event. I won't say that it was too long-awaited; I'm just glad to get anything at all for RuneQuest. I was not disappointed.

Physical: A perfect-bound book of 128 pages. The front cover is a well-rendered painting of warriors at the great Sun Dome Temple; they look rather like Vikings, while the warrior on the back looks rather like a Roman centurion. The front painting is perhaps a trifle "busy"; the many details detract somewhat from the overall visual impact. Inside the front cover is a fine looking full-color map of the Sun County area. The page stock is heavy bond, and should wear well. Tinted areas and maps, as well as art, is present in abundance. There seems to have been little expense spared on the physical quality of this effort.

Quantity: A great deal of material indeed is packed into the book. There is a detailed overview of the area, including major personalities and Temperature and precipitation (which

caught my eye). An expanded writeup of the cult of Yelmalio gives a quantity of information not available from the "Gods of Glorantha" book. Descriptions of the Sun Dome Temple, and the Sun Dome Templars and Militia round out the background material. The remainder of the book is devoted to encounters and four complete scenarios, plus numerous scenario hooks. All in all, this is the most voluminous writeup of an area of Glorantha I've ever seen.

Quality: Here we come to the meat of the question. How good is it?

This is somewhat difficult to judge. The original Chaosium materials were clearly classic, groundbreaking pieces. The later Avalon Hill material was truly wretched, almost as bad as AD&D stuff. What standard should Sun County be held to? Perhaps the best thing to do is try to judge it on its own merits. The background material is written in a quite professional style, clear and to the point. This is perhaps not surprising, as some of the material is taken from the original RQII Pavis supplement. Each sub-section is clearly labelled, and no problems have surfaced on first reading. NPCs are well detailed, though the method of showing armor and hit points is a trifle annoying — white silhouettes on a light gray background are labelled in the various hit locations. Personally, I prefer the straightforward linear listing of previous supplements. This is hardly a major factor, however!

The interior art is an infinite improvement on the horrendous art so beloved by previous editor Nick Atlas. The smaller pieces in particular are very good indeed, while the full-page art is merely serviceable — it has a slightly crude quality that may or may not be deliberate. All interior art is black and white. The book is liberally supplied with maps of smaller areas.

I've not yet had a chance to use the scenarios and encounters, but they seem up to the old RuneQuest standard, concentrating less on combat and more on roleplaying — a refreshing difference from recent material, both RQ and otherwise. One thing which disappointed me somewhat: some of the scenario material has already been published in "Tales of the Reach-

ing Moon". While I appreciate the chance for those RQers who don't get TotRM to read these, I would rather have seen all-new material.

Another note: I've noticed that I'm not the only one who keeps saying "Sun Country". For some reason, a county seems like an anachronism in Glorantha — I wonder why?

Price: about $20 (I forget exactly, and it isn't on the book). Hmm. That's a fairly considerable sum for one supplement — I can remember when you could buy an entire system for the same amount, and pick up dice with the change. Given the prices of similar material today, however, I can certainly say it's worth picking up — for RuneQuest players, in any case. Fantasy players in general can probably find enough applicable material to make it worthwhile. Expensive? Yes. But I'd gladly pay half again as much ... particularly if I could do so, say, six times a year.

All in all, the quality of material in this book makes it a must-have for RuneQuesters. "Sun Country" is a fine work, which I hope will re-establish the tradition of outstanding RuneQuest products.
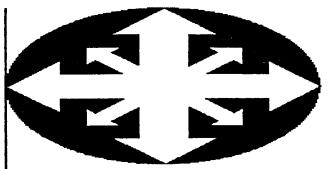
Characters and Credibility

Once again I've been drawn into issues of gaming philosophy.

I suspect the kiss of death (or at least one kiss of death) for an RPG campaign is the when the GM loses credibility. Time and again I've seen a GM lose control of a campaign because it was obvious that he was changing results to suit his whims — it didn't seem to matter if he was cheating for or against the players. Once it was clear that he was cheating at all, the players lost interest.

On the other hand, I'm not sure a game could be run without some cheating — adjusting a killing blow to the head to a maiming blow to the arm, for example.

Perhaps the secret of a good GM is simply to lie/cheat believably. In which case, what makes GMs different from politicians? 8^>}

THE HORROR ... THE HORROR ...

Rumors have been flying on the InterNet about the upcoming ORIGINS/GENCON. They may or may not be true ... but if there's any chance that they are true, they could shake the gaming world to the core.

Those who are aware of TSR's corporate history (remember SPI!) will not be surprised to hear that once again, they are up to their old tricks. According to messages on the InterNet, TSR has been making use of its position as the main sponsor of the combined GENCON/ORIGINS convention to censor its rivals, banning those games that displease it.

A game called "Suburban Slasher" has been completely banned from the con; in addition, Dragon magazine refuses to carry ads for it.

Live roleplaying games have also been forbidden — 'live' as in the SIL, ILF, IFGS, and NERO. Supposedly TSR feels that such games are too dangerous, encouraging a confusion between fantasy and reality.

This is nothing new, of course. TSR has always had more than a little of the Third Reich in its corporate character. I recall Gary Gygax's ranting propaganda diatribes in The Dragon well. Still, it's disconcerting that they continue to get away with it.

Even more disconcerting is the news that GAMA may be preparing a Code of Decency for all of its members — which includes most major RPG manufacturers. I believe. Supposedly White Wolf recently had to recall a publication

with a topless Elven maiden on the cover; this may be a sign of things to come. Games will either have to be "Sanitized for your Protection" or face insurmountable difficulties in reaching the market. Rumor has it that all this is an attempt to avoid pressure from hostile Fundamentalist groups ...

Sad. Game companies may destroy the roleplaying hobby out of fear of those who don't even buy the games. Looks like it could be dark times ahead . .

It would be nice to believe that some game companies will resist the self-censorship of a Code; unfortunately, history indicates otherwise. When similar moral pressures were brought against the comic-book industry in the late 1940's, the industry simply folded. They adopted an incredibly restrictive Code that effectively snuffed out any chance of a new or creative work. Only in the past few years has that Code been reduced in power. Thirty years of pablum! A whole generation of artists and writers unable to write anything of worth!

The weak point was the distributors — that's what made the Comic Code so powerful. Sure, some companies may refuse to censor themselves, but if they can't get their products into the stores they won't be in business for long. I don't know if games are distributed in the same manner as comic books — after all, it is a considerably more specialized product.

Even if direct-distributing is feasible, a Code-sponsoring organization, dominating the industry, could effectively ban even those works by companies not part of the group. A rogue company might attempt to bypass the whole distributor network, but if things got very nasty, GAMA could refuse to allow its members to sell products to any store that carried non-GAMA goods. What could the store owners do then? Give up selling AD&D so they can continue to carry 'Suburban Slasher'? It may seem unlikely that such brutal business tactics could happen in modern America — but only if you haven't read a newspaper for the last twelve years.

The thing is that TSR has always been evil. But the prospect of their gaining control over the whole gaming industry is truly chilling. The latest thing I've heard is that GAMA and TSR are planning to ban ALL advertising for Horror games COMPLETELY. This may not be true (I hope not), but if it is ...

You know, I somehow doubt that the people who currently control TSR are gamers, or understand roleplaying? Not that "Mr. Roleplaying God" Gary Gygax (blecchh) was any prize ...

It shouldn't be too surprising that TSR cares about nothing but making money. My impression is that they have absolutely no commitment to gaming, except insofar as they can make a profit out of it — in other words, there's no art in what they do. It's all for profit, and nothing — no standard of quality or self-respect — can stand in the way. Thank goodness that isn't true of every RPG company.

As I said, I hope this isn't true; and if anyone knows more about this than I do, please let me know. I'll certainly apologize if I've slandered anyone! However, I won't apologize for my opinions ... 8^>}

172 Troubles: The Demon In the Machine

My PC does seem determined to throw a monkeywrench into my works one way or the

other. For one thing, my 3.5'' floppy drive just died. And though it may not have been obvious, Rack & Rune #8 gave me far more trouble than I'd ever expected ...

I was working like mad on R&R #8, really racing the clock although I did start a few days earlier than usual. I've been using a new DTP program upgrade that I recently bought — Publish-It 2.0. Graphics-wise, things were looking good. I stayed up till about 4AM the night before I had to print the 'zine, though the next day was a workday (Friday). I set my alarm clock an hour earlier than usual, planning to get up and print out (my printer is kind of noisy — I've never had a complaint from anyone, but I'd hate to wake somebody up). I got up and started printing out. First page — no problem. Then...What was this? There was nothing happening! The machine was frozen up! I had to turn off the machine, and restart the program. To make a long story short, it turned out the the program would only print one page at a time, and then die, forcing me to turn the whole thing off and on. This happened even if I only asked for a single page.Furthermore, it wasn't printing all the graphics — some were skipped completely, while others were only partially there. Also, my page headers were completely eliminated. I did what I could, and ended up being more than an hour late for work (my boss was not pleased). Regardless, I made 90 copies of the 'zine, despite the fact that I'd noticed several errors — I'd been so busy trying to print that I hadn't had a chance to do any serious proofreading.

Later, I called the Publish-It company (Timeworks), and was told that my problem was not enough memory. The program needed about 570k RAM, they said,and I had too many other programs resident. I had to make a plain boot diskette to start the machine up clean. So I did.I tried everything I could imagine — a plain disk formatted by''FORMAT /S'', one with a modi-fied AUTOEXEC.BAT file, one with a modified CONFIG.SYS file, and with both. I tried reinstalling the Publish-It program in mono-chrome. I tried running the program without a mouse driver — keyboard only. That wasn't fun! But no matter what I tried, it would not print out complete graphics, nor would it print the headers. To say I was exasperated would be an under-statement — I was obsessed. Finally, I tried running MEM /C to see how much memory my boot diskette was leaving free — it was 579k, yet still I was having the same problem! There was no time left to call TimeWorks — I had to deliver my 'zines to collation on Sunday. I was running late, and barely had a chance to drop my friends off at our regular Sunday afternoon RuneQuest game. I'd miss a few hours of that, but collation came first.

I drove to MIT (it's only a few blocks from the RQ game), found a parking spot, went to the usual collation room, and waited. As usual, I was the first one there — I checked all the other rooms, but found only students. So I sat back and waited. And waited. And waited. After about half an hour I started to wonder. People had been this late before, but it was unusual. So I went to a phone and called Mark. ''Hi, Mark,'' I said, ''isn't collation today?'' ''No,'' he replied, ''it's next week.'' So I spent the next week not looking at my 'zine. The day before it was due, I tried to print it out — behold, it still wouldn't print the Rune strip! I ended up taping copies of the Runes onto every page by hand.

Pretty funny, huh? Murphy lives — in my house ... 8^>}

OH, THE HUMANITY!

I've played Nightlife (which I understand is similar to the Vampire RPG), and was interested in the Humanity Points concept — the

idea that players would be involved in a constant struggle to stay at least somewhat human. There were two problems with this, in my experience:

1) In Nightlife, once a character is down to 0 Humanity Points it becomes an NPC. No reason for it — just "blam! — You're an NPC". That's too manipulative for me — after all, why would a character care about such things? Obviously they wouldn't even have the concept! Loss of Humanity should have had negative consequences, but game-logical, self-consistent ones. Becoming more susceptible to control/summoning spells would be one way, as would the strengthening of species weaknesses.

2) Humanity Points are usually not used for roleplaying purposes — instead they seem to be treated as "spell points". Players I watched showed no concern about their character's Humanity. GMs often concurred by ignoring Humanity Point penalties for inhuman acts such as murder. So what was the point?

RUNES

The Runes shown were Air, Beast, Chaos, Darkness, Death, Disorder, Dragonewt, Earth, Fate, Fertility, Fire, Illusion, Infinity, Luck, Magic, Man, Mastery, Mobility, Moon, Plant, Spirit, Stasis, Truth, Undeath, and Water.

They were, obviously, in alphabetical order. 8^>}

The Undead Rune is not standard; Harmony was missing.

COMMENTS

Collier: Something about the cover puts me in mind of a review of Disney's "The Little Mermaid" by Allan Havey on "Night After Night, a late-night comedy talk show on Comedy Central: "A woman and an animal have sex. It's animated. It's Disney. They got away with it. I love it. Twenty stars." ******************** Now, how about a 'zine? 8^>}

Swanson: Hope the new job is going well. Regarding multi-threading, I certainly agree that this is a superior mode for a campaign. How many threads would be best? Not all the threads would be of equal "thickness" or "length". Overlap could add considerable complication to the gamemaster's job.

Hmm. How could multi-threading be presented in a game supplement? In fact, how could many advanced GMing techniques be presented? I pretty much learned what I know firsthand — but if gaming isn't to die out, it'll probably be necessary to get this info into books. What do you think?

Blacow: Glad you've enjoyed the Live game writeups. While not all RQ PC's roll for random "gifts", Yelmalians and Humakti do, upon initiation and ascension to higher status. In any case, dragonewts receive random gifts because they lack many of the support features of other-species PCs, such as a temple, ransom, an organized society. More importantly, Warrior

Dragonewts start out with no Dragon Effects; there obviously must be a mechanism for gaining them. This was the first (and only) method I thought of. In any case, a dragonewt might almost be said to be a hybrid PC/NPC.

Derryberry: Roleplaying flirtation has long been a confusing issue for me, particularly with same-sex GM and player playing opposite-sex NPC and PC. When I finally had to deal with the issue as a GM, I resorted to the cliches of bad movies "Oh, it's so hot in here! You spilled that all over my dress ... I guess I'll have to wash that stupid ol' dress!" etc.. In retrospect, I should credit SCTV for inspiration, too. 8^>}

You've pointed out a weakness of RuneQuest quite accurately. Of course, a perfect system-representation of real life would be real life; still, a game should be as reality-based as possible. I wonder ... at one point should one simply count on the GM's good sense?

As far as social skills in roleplaying go, I've always felt that these should be roleplayed out, for the most part. If a tongue-tied player has a character with a Fast-Talk of %90, I'll at least ask him for the general thrust of his argument. Some have still complained that this is burdensome, however.

Vlad was the leader of the Nereyon PC group — in his mind, and apparently the player's. But the other PCs did not agree. This led to problems ... The other players weren't happy with Vlad's solo decision to kill, but by then the deed was done — and they knew that if they weren't careful, he would leave them, probably be caught, and be taken to one of the Dark Towers ... where he'd no doubt spill everything.

Greentech still looks good. I'm getting curious about details, though. When and where does it meet? How long do the sessions last?

In the encounter with Death, the players didn't _know_ that Death was a sore loser ... but there were signs and hints they could have deciphered. They didn't, though.

Erlandsen: Loved the "Common myths". Too bad the gaming world in general can't see it! But then, the average munchkin probably wouldn't get it anyhow ...

Regarding the use of pseudonyms in my NERO writeup, I was not protecting NERO; I was protecting myself. There has been some bad feeling knocking around since the NERO game, and I don't want anyone to be madder at me than necessary. Something about live roleplaying seems to make people touchy! But by now, you may already know that. 8^>}

Jorenby: NERO may not be Illuminati (they don't seem clever enough), but some members do seem to exhibit cult-like behavior, such as messianic recruitment.

Deciding what standard of morality to use in a game is a difficult question. There was a time when I preferred to go for the unexpected. A vampire king that the PCs were asked to destroy turned out to be the hero of the piece, for example. The time came when that reverse became predictable, too. For a while I tried switching back and forth. Since then I've come to the conclusion that only a full spectrum of morality in NPCs is adequate — and the only was to represent a full, seemingly random spectrum of morality is to wing it. I can think of no tool better suited to creating a simulation of a world (with all the complexity thereof) than the human brain.

Keller: Sorry to hear about your state of computer-deprivation. Is it a moral stand, or what? Incidentally, did you know that one of the tabloid "news" magazines ran a headline that Dracula was afraid of getting AIDS?

Phillies: Glad to see "Pickering is still going strong. I don't remember if you already said: Is the whole thing already complete, or are you writing it for each issue? If the former, how many more installments will there be?

I'd thought that you wouldn't need to know GURPS to get Teuton. Knowing Jim Starlin's "Dreadstar comic book would probably help, though.

Plamondon: I believe "The Computer Shopper" has undergone quite a few changes recently — for one thing, it is now pretty exclusively IBM clone-based. I've also been warned that the cheapest prices should be checked out with the Better Business Bureau. Have you had any bad experiences with it?

Butler: You know, Bob, I never realized who you were at the game. Why didn't you tell me?!? I'm filled with curiosity about who you were talking to (the one who mentioned my name?).

The photos look great. By the way, Margo wants you dead. 8^>}

You were associated with NESFS? I've always wanted to hear the full story of all that. I understand that something happened, but it's not clear what. Regarding Betty, she's gone. The seductions of power were too much for her, I'm afraid. Incidentally, "Thud & Blunder has always been free.

Nextish:

A Whole Lot of Stuff I didn't have time for this issue, including Nereyon continued, Online games, and my new RuneQuest campaign. —>PM