

OPINION & OUTLOOK

Between Scylla and Charybdis

BY DAVID FOX

There I was, minding my own business, when, totally unprovoked, Rodger MacGowan called to ask if I would write an opinion article for *C3i*. Well, I thought, they sure don't pay very much, but then the magazine only comes out every eight months, why not? So now, freshly returned from *Origins '96* in Columbus, Ohio, here we go:

By now the magazine that you're holding in your hands is proof enough that rumors of GMT's death have been greatly exaggerated. Samurai, the *Godot* of wargaming, is gracing dining room tables across America with severed-head counters and probably by the time you read this the *SPQR* Player's Guide, *Battle for North Africa*, and *Barbarossa* should also be reality (ahem).

Not that it wasn't close there for a while, back in the Spring, as Sammy hit one delay after the other and *C3i* Nr.6 doggedly refused to be published. While the rumors were that swallowing all those \$30 vouchers would choke the GMT goat, the reality was that there was only so much Gene Billingsley and Rodger MacGowan to go around, and while listening to the siren-song of a big, big computer deal they let the ship drift dangerously close to Scylla and Charybdis (if you want to go look those up in Homer's *Odyssey*, I'll wait). As someone said on the *Internet*, people were running out of things to spend all of their vouchers on. But now those days are behind us, 'cuz Gene has learned that the essence of customer service is to under-promise and over-deliver, right?



I, for one, thoroughly enjoyed myself at *Origins '96*, although I can't say the same for everyone else - many of the board and computer wargame companies see *Origins* as becoming dominated by roleplaying and CCG's, and at the end of the convention they vowed to combine their efforts to have a bigger presence by promoting more demos and open gaming rooms. This means a lot more homework by everyone, including GMT, whose preparation this year was, shall we say, disjointed at best. Stay tuned for more on this one.

Sammy was the biggest hit at the GMT booth (manned by Mark Herman, Richard Berg, Gary Gonzalez and yours truly), and was usually greeted by "Wow, is that really **Samurai**? It won't

vanish if I touch the box, will it?" If you could have woken up Richard Berg long enough, he might even have explained some of the rules to you.

My impression of the convention was summed up by watching the *Magic* re-seller across the aisle, who had a 25-cent *Magic* card dispenser set up that was doing more business than any of the boardgame companies. It was worth going though, just to watch Mark Herman and Gary Gonzalez, while working on their fifth vodka and tonic each, beat Chris Perello and Ted Raicer at their own *Fateful Lightning* game. And I think everyone needs to see the *Vampire* role-players wandering around the hotel at 1 a.m. , wearing silly costumes and mumbling things like "The Gate is closed but I need the Iron Key of Thangorod to open it." I had the Iron Key of Thangorod once, but I drank a glass of warm, salty water and it cleared right up.

So, I guess, the overall message is, if you have a chance of going to *Origins '97*, you should go. You get to meet us, we get to meet you, and the nightlife is quite stimulating (see the above paragraph). And who knows, maybe next year GMT will actually have some tournament prizes to give away - probably more vouchers! *Origins* will be in Columbus for the next two years at least, so make your travel plans now.

