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Star Frontiers Featured Review



ROBOT SAFARI:

ADVENTURE FOR *FUTUREWORLD*

UNAUTHORIZED *BERSERKER* REPAIRMAN

MAN, *MYTH & MAGIC* REVIEW

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THE SPACE GAMER

NUMBER 60 — FEBRUARY, 1983

We have a heavily review-oriented issue this month: In addition to our normal
slew of capsules, we have Steve Jackson's review, analysis, and repair kit for
FBI's *Berserker*, plus full feature review treatments of TSR's *Star Frontiers* and
Yaquinto's *Man, Myth & Magic*. Never let it be said we're not opinionated.

Other features this time include *Robot Safari*, a scenario for Chaosium's
FutureWorld (from the *Worlds of Wonder* system). *Robot Safari*, incidentally, is
the winner of our contest for TSG 54: "Write a scenario about our Huntress
cover," remember? Also included are a piece on character backgrounds for FRP
characters, notes on PBMin, the results of the "Car Wars Magic Items" contest,
a new column, and all our usual stuff.

By the way, those of you who played *Battlesuit* last issue probably noticed
that the counters provided were misregistered. We've given you some new ones
this time around.

—Aaron Allston

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ROBOT SAFARI



a big-game scenario
for *FutureWorld*

Welcome to New Tanganyika, homeworld of the famous Robot Safari! As a participant in one of our standard five-day hunting tours, you'll be facing the exciting challenge of tracking fierce and cunning robotic animals, wild game programmed to act and fight just like their live counterparts.

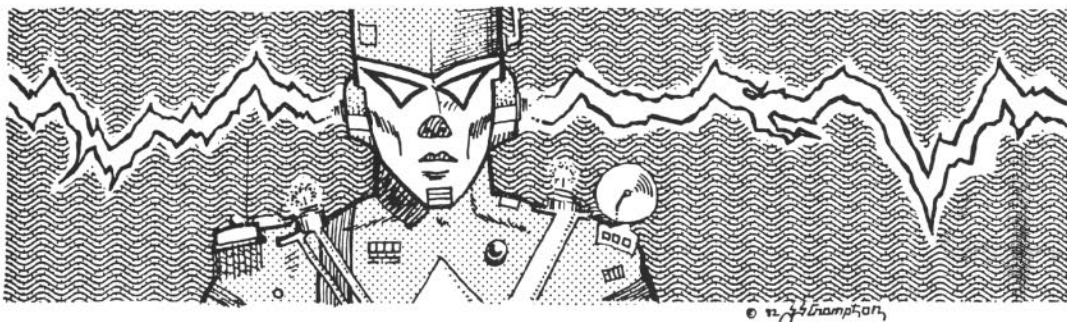
All your hunting needs, including arms, provisions, a hauler and a personal guide, are provided at no extra charge. So prepare yourself for the challenge of Robot Safari — and good hunting!

by Donald F. Harrington

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Where We're Going



This month, we have another "Where We're *All* Going" column — a look at the whole game business, rather than just TSG and SJ Games. But, looking through back issues of TSG, I'm reminded that predictions can be dangerous. So, before I get into the commentary and soothsaying, I'm going to run a scorecard on some predictions made in these pages in March 1978 — or, allowing for publication time-lags, five years ago. These were written by Howard Thompson, then publisher of TSG . . . and if some of them look a little strange now, it's a reflection on the way times have changed, rather than on Howard's predictive ability. Soothsaying is a risky business! Those 1978 predictions:

1. "By 1983 an existing game company will be over the \$10,000,000 annual sales mark in simulation products." No problem here; last year, TSR probably sold more than ten million dollars worth of *D&D* material alone.

2. "By 1983 there will be a national gaming tournament with over \$10,000 in cash prizes." Sadly, no. Everybody talks about this, and has been talking about it for years, but nobody does anything. I would guess that the cash prize budget for *Origins* — the closest thing to a "national game tournament" we have — was closer to \$1,000 than \$10,000 last year.

3. "By 1983 there will be at least two established 'family game' firms committed to wargaming." This has *sort of* happened. Howard anticipated an increase in popularity of "classical" hex-type wargaming, so that game companies like Parker Brothers and Milton Bradley would release similar games. Instead, *D&D* became popular, and several of the established game companies tried to jump on the fantasy bandwagon. Whether their products could be considered "wargames" is a very questionable point — but there was, in a manner of speaking, a wargame impact on the mass market.

4. "Computerized simulation games will be very popular by 1983. However, hobbyists will rip off illegal cassette, disk-

ette, and PROM copies of game programs so extensively that larger firms will eventually get out of the market altogether." Not so. The ripoffs continue, but the market is so good that the big companies can do very well by saturating distribution before the ripoff artists catch up. The losers are the small software companies — their distribution is less effective, and the pirates and users' groups can often get illegal copies out before the computer stores have the real thing.

5. "By 1983 at least two-thirds of the existing military miniature and simulation game firms will be defunct, moribund, or bought out." This seemed a reasonable prediction — everybody in the industry has been predicting a "shakeout" for years, myself included. And companies do fail. But the survival rate has been higher than anyone expected. I would guess that fewer than one-third of the companies extant in 1978 have vanished. This is good for the hobby — it means there is more variety available. In many cases (though by no means all), the companies which have failed were those that deserved to go under, due to bad management or terrible product. An industry needs turnover to weed out the turkeys . . . but we should all be glad that this prediction was short of the mark.

6. "By 1983 the World Science Fiction Convention will be awarding the Hugo for best SF&F game." If this has even been *considered* by the World Science Fiction Society, I haven't heard about it. Pity, that.

7. "By 1983 SPI, Avalon Hill, Minifigs, Heritage, TSR, and Metagaming will be the dominant companies." SPI is gone, Heritage is in Chapter 11; Metagaming and Minifigs have probably lost ground as far as industry share goes, AH is doing a little better, and TSR has better than half of the whole pie. Several companies could claim as much right as these to be considered "dominant", chief among them GDW.

The moral of that story: this is not an easy hobby to predict! A prognostication that seems reasonable when it is made can be blown away utterly by the passage of a

few years. Having thus attempted to cover myself, I'll attempt a few predictions of my own. These are all for a one- to two-year time period; my crystal ball gets really foggy after that.

1. The biggest growth in the game field will be home computer games. Wargames (or adventure games, if you like) will be a significant part of the computer game field, but nowhere near the majority. Home video-arcade machines will become comparatively *less* popular.

2. Role-playing games and adventures will continue to dominate the non-computer portion of the game industry. TSR will continue to have higher sales than any other company, but their market share will diminish, as their mass-market customers become sophisticated and abandon their products for better-designed competing games.

3. Minigames will increase in variety and availability. Inflation will fuel this trend. By 1985, there will be a lot of people buying \$7.00 minigames instead of \$20.00 "full-sized" games, especially if the minigame has equivalent or better play value.

4. Game companies will appear, die, and be bought out, as they always have. Figure on at least one new "star" appearing every two years, and at least one big, solid-looking company going under (*a la* SPI) every two to three years. Size is not always good armor. The yearly turnover will be 10 to 15%, but the total number of active game companies will remain about the same.

5. Play-by-mail will continue to grow; so will play-by-phone. But for every correspondence game that survives, three more will crater after the first few months.

6. The game industry, as a whole, will prosper even though the economy may not. The national game conventions will continue to grow and to become more professional. Cooperation between convention organizers may lay the groundwork for a national gaming society . . . which will probably never have more than 20 to 30,000 members, but will be a great convenience to those who do join.