

Belter (GDW)

M. Miller & F. Chadwick

22" by 28" map, 480 playing pieces, 3 sheets of charts and tables, 12-page rules, 1 die, pasteboard box. \$11.98.

Belter is a multi-player game in which players take the roles of the leaders of great mining corporations which are in competition for the wealth of the asteroid belt. Competition is by political, economic and military means (on the theory, apparently, that there ain't too much law and order out in them ther asteroids). Features include: prospecting and mining system, maintenance rules, a system for recruiting personnel, a nice rule on labor relations (transferring personnel, riots, strikes, etc.), shipping and equipment purchase rules. The advanced game brings into play the PKF (Peace Keeping Force), dedicated to protecting the industrialized states back on Earth. The PKF Player wins by maximizing price for the products of the belt. That player may also accept bribes (if simulations are teaching devices, then...). When greedy corporate players are allowed to revolt against the PKF, it is a bit too much of a good thing, since it takes *Belter* out of the realm of limited conflict into a more conventional setting of revolt and repression that muddies the basic themes of the game. Still and all, an interesting product with much to recommend it. Moderately complex, and playable in an afternoon. 7(10)

Bloodtree Rebellion (GDW)

L. Willis/J. Harshman

22" by 28" map, 480 playing pieces, city maps display, 4 organization displays, 16-page rules, 1 die, pasteboard box. \$12.98.

The human-colonized planet Sombra is occupied by a clone regiment whose purpose is to insure the exploitation of the planet by the Petrochem Orionid interstellar cartel. Needless to say, the indigenous populace is less than thrilled by the presence of these futuristic Hessians. Accordingly, they rebel. Deep within the Bloodtree forests they set up their sanctuary and begin a guerrilla campaign against their oppressors. This is the framework of the game. Within that framework, the rules allow for agtprop, assassinations, kidnappings, riots, demonstrations, arrests (and prison breaks), desertions from the ranks of loyal troops, espionage and most of the other elements of modern insurgency. Interestingly enough, if you remove the sf trappings, you have a very accurate treatise on the "little wars" of our own age. Some-what complex, but playable within a few hours. Buck Rogers goes to Vietnam. 6(10)

Chitin: I (MC)

H. Thompson

8.5" by 14" map, 112 uncut playing pieces, 24-page rules (largely advertising), resealable plastic bag. \$2.95.

Science fiction provides many possibilities, most of which have not yet been explored by wargaming companies. Luckily, the designer of *Chitin: I* is a Jack Vance fan who saw fit to borrow an idea from his id. The game posits a planet dominated by intelligent insects who regularly slaughter each other in "harvest wars," fought for the rich *vlaras* which the hive uses for sustenance. The game uses a standard "move/fight" sequence of play for two sides. The design departs from the norm when it liberally does out combat bonuses by

unit type, making for a tactical daisy chain in which one unit type is extremely effective against a second type which is effective against a third type, etc. While the combat units are busy rending and tearing at the psychic behest of leader types called "basics," the workers scramble around trying to snag as much *vlaras* as possible. Fairly short and simple. Lots of fun. Those with a taste for the bizarre will appreciate their units' ability to eat friendly casualties. 5(10)

Colony Delta (FGU)

A. Gruen

Two mounted 11" by 17" maps, 2 sheets of playing pieces (about half blank), 13-page rules, one die, pasteboard box. \$12.00.

Humans and aliens join in a brushfire war over a rich colony world. The humans (from Earth) compete with the "Siggies" (from Sigma Draconis, and suitably bug-eyed), both claiming the planet because of their colonists. Winning is by Victory Points, which are gained by farming and mining the planet, not fighting the enemy. Indeed, purchasing troops costs Victory Points, rather than money, so a purely military campaign could win battles at the expense of losing the war. As an added fillip, the planet has semi-intelligent (whatever that means) native life which dislikes all aliens. This is abstracted in an attrition rule, which is supplanted by alien units in the advanced game. The chief drawback with the basic game is the lack of action. Each player may only make six round-trip deliveries to the planet in twelve turns, and must use these to bring in everything (not only colonists). The advance game removes these limits, but will last for a decent while. 5(10)

Dixie (SPI)

R. Simonsen/J. Nelson

17" by 22" map, 100 playing pieces, 12-page rules, six-sided die, resealable plastic bag. \$4.00.

If some preparatory text were included with this package, it could be titled "How Not to Design a Wargame." It seems the Confederacy secured a peace treaty with the Union at the end of the Civil War by mutual exhaustion, and so remained independent. It is now the midst of the Depression, and war has begun anew. The rationale is plausible, but the game robs it of its credence. First, both sides begin the game with virtually identical forces. This may work well in chess and Go, but those are not played on a map of the United States. The real culprit is the Administrative Point system, which is structured so that the player with the greater number of points is the winner, given at least mediocre play. There are a host of other problems, but this dead horse has had the skin flayed off it long ago. Of course, one should not waste time or money on *Dixie*, but students of the history of wargames might be interested to know that the concept of Administrative Points was invented with this game. 2(10)

Dune (AH)

Future Pastimes/M. Uhl & R. Hamblen

22" by 28" map, 3 sheets of playing pieces, 2 battle wheels, 54 cards, player aid pad, 8-page rules, pasteboard box. \$15.00.

Frank Herbert's *Dune* has been rendered into game form by the designers of the estimable *Cosmic Encounters*. Gone from the transfer of novel to game is the "reproduce

everything down to the protagonist's sneeze on page 182" approach; it is replaced by a game which is intended for the family market. Players become characters representing one of six different factions on Arrakis; each character will lead his or her faction to glory (i.e., control of the planet) or defeat. The system centers around control of spice, which is highly addictive and the main export of Arrakis. Battles are won and lost dependent on the number of spice tokens present in an area. Treachery, storms and the fearsome *shai-hulud* (gigantic sandworms) enliven affairs. *Dune* is a nice little game, but nothing special. 6(10)

GEV (MC)

S. Jackson

12" x 14" map, 135 uncut playing pieces, 24-page rules, resealable plastic bag. \$2.95.

This game is compatible with *Ogre*, but concentrates on the interaction of other weapons systems, primarily the GEV, or Ground Effects Vehicle. Presumably this is "Son of *Ogre*!" It is good enough to warrant "Revenge of Son of *Ogre*." *GEV* is not as clean as *Ogre*, but probably has more replay value. There are some imaginative scenarios, including one involving an armored train. Possibly the best single micro game. 8(10)

Godsfire (MC)

L. Willis

Two 22" by 34" maps, 960 die-cut playing pieces, 616 uncut playing pieces, 15 system sheets, 6 national government sheets, 16-page rules, pasteboard box. \$15.95.

Those who dream great dreams of galactic domination will like this one. From two to fifteen players can take part, though components are provided for only eight. *Godsfire* is divided into a basic and an advanced game. The basic game concentrates on the mechanics of operational space combat in three dimensions. The advanced game adds a thick pastiche of political and economic elements, including taxation, loans, production, political parties, revolts, subversion, diplomacy, inflation, elections.... Well, anyway, there's not much left to the imagination. Either the basic or advanced games would have been quite interesting alone, if further developed. Taken together in unprocessed form, they are a wee bit too much. The amount of data the players are asked to handle can be immense even when only two are competing. Quite long and complex but definitely worth a good look, if systems politics in the far future is your bag. 5(10)

Holy War (MC)

L. Willis

12" by 14" map, 135 uncut playing pieces, 24-page rules, resealable plastic bag. \$2.95.

Amtik is a nebulous, space-dwelling creature some 400,000 kilometers long. Out of scientific curiosity, it has enclosed a cosmic anomaly within itself, and created a pocket universe. Unanticipated intelligent life developed on the planets in this universe and discovered seams on either end of Amtik, which led to a religious schism. The resulting war between the Holy War, who believed in Amtik as a god, and the Sun Throwers, who wished to give Amtik a "hot-seam" by hurling a star into a seam, was rather bloody. If the player is interested in the struggle, that is too bad. The rules to *Holy War* are extremely