

When you **confront Student Life**, roll +weird.

On a 10+, you come out better off - gain +1-ongoing while you're on campus.

On a 7-9, you make a point, and an enemy. Gain +1-ongoing, but watch your back.

On a miss, they trash you in the ensuing debate.

When you **brave the undercroft**, act under fire.

When you **acquire Out of Character 2012, Issue 2**, roll +cool.

On a 10+, it's awesome and you don't have to pay for it.

On a 7-9, as above, but the MC picks one:

- Your article is the worst in the issue.
- Someone else wants it before you've finished reading it.
- It's the last OOC for the year.

When you **take notes in your lecture**, roll +sharp. On a 7-9 pick one, on a 10+ pick all three:

- You meet a guy who knows a guy who need some part-time work done.
- You actually pay attention. Gain +1-prepared.
- You catch up on some sleep. Gain +1-forward.

When you **sit a test**, roll +prepared.

On a 10+ you pass with flying colours. Set your prepared to 1.

As usual, if you like what you see you can find out more about SAGA Inc. by visiting <http://www.saga.org.nz>. If you want to get in touch with me, the editor, I'm email-able at [promotions@saga.org.nz](mailto:promotions@saga.org.nz).

Out of Character 2, Son of Out of Character, was produced by indentured house elves in a small, dimly-lit factory. Body type is Chaparral Pro, headers are set in crust\_clean and VHS Good Luck for You. Vincent Baker did not received any money from this issue; I just like his games that much.

Many thanks to our contributors for this issue: Gareth Reynolds, Matt Harward and Alan Downward.

A tutorial on how to make awesome images like those found in this booklet, can be found here: <http://is.gd/FMRJIc>

“Being sisters is like...a rattlesnake! You can have the head of a rattlesnake, with its sharp teeth and curious tongue, or the tail of a rattlesnake, with it's mesmerisin' rattle. But only together do you have a whole rattlesnake.”

“And apart, all we are is just a screaming mess, and a...a hollow object.”

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It's a rulebook, not a sonnet. So stop writing it pretty, and write it functional.



Can one person's affect those of the club? When I ascended to the lofty position of Quartermaster (a position now filled by Gareth Reynolds, voted in on our intro night in early March), the club's demographics were (at least in my mind) somewhat different to where they stand now. Board gaming was less popular at the club, and wargaming perhaps more prominent. Since then I hope I've pushed the story-gaming agenda heavily. The club owns copies of *Apocalypse World*, *Spirit of the Century* and *Fiasco*, and I'm making sure they all get used - either by using them myself, or by constant evangelism to our members.

To quote Kanye - no one man should have all that power. I would like to think that over the years I've encouraged other people to share their enthusiasm to the club, but I know it's scary, especially when you're new. So this is my explicit invitation to you, regardless of how much time you've spent at SAGA:

Get involved. Be vocal. We love to hear what makes you excited about gaming. The more you tell people about how your niche of the hobby is awesome, the more likely it is that you'll get people excited about it. The more people are excited, the more people will want to play your games. And the more people play your games, the more you get to play the games you want to play.

Where can you get involved? The best place is our weekly meetings. Run stuff you love, and tell your friends at SAGA about why your game rocks. But we also have other venues - the Facebook page and the mailing list, for example.

Of course, there's another venue that I'm particularly keen on, and that's your friendly *Out of Character* magazine. People read this thing, believe it or not (after all, you're reading it right now), and the more people contribute, the better it gets.

So if you have something you're excited about, get out there and push it. Tell people at SAGA and on the internet. Send me your views and opinions, to put in this magazine. Get people excited.

Because otherwise, I'll have to quote Kanye again. And I'm not sure I can handle that right now.



For more information on any of these activities, see your local committee member.

## **21–22 APRIL – MINICON**

The littlest convention in the country! Come along to Kirkwood C6 and C7 rooms to celebrate SAGA's gaming community with some role-playing, board gaming, or even a spot of wargaming. Events will run from 10:00am until 5:00pm both days. Gold coin donation goes to buying more stuff for the club, and sponsors of SI-FI, the SAGA Inc. Fruit Initiative, are always welcome.

## **25 APRIL – AVENGERS PRIVATE SCREENING**

Join up with Si-Fi Soc for a night of gaming followed by the release of *The Avengers*, a movie about superheroes. A \$15 entry fee covers the cost of dinner plus the movie plus gaming. Venue TBD.

## **2–4 JUNE – BUCKETS OF DICE 2012**

More gaming than you can throw a Star Destroyer at. Join us at the College of Education for a weekend of gaming excellence, including the Massively Multiplayer Board Game *Sun and Starship* and the Live Action *You Are Cordially Invited To...*

More details at <http://www.saga.org.nz/bod>

## **28–30 SEPTEMBER – SANCON**

The only thing geekier than a gaming convention is a convention with more than just gaming. Movie showings, fashion shows, gaming, shooting people with nerf guns, demonstrations, and other special events are all planned. Leave the weekend open!

<http://www.sancon.org.nz>



BY JAN-YVES RUZICKA

Apocalypse World[1] is a roleplaying game by Vincent Baker. It's a post-apocalyptic game - think *The Book of Eli*, *The Road*, or *Mad Max*.

Here's the cool thing: everyone is some kind of awesome. You don't screw with Denzel Washington in *The Book of Eli* because he's a total bad-ass. If you're playing a game of Apocalypse World, *all* your characters are total bad-asses.

Here's the problem: your first game of Apoc World is pretty awesome. You're running around the apocalypse being awesome. If you're the Gunlugger, then you've got a virtual arsenal of weaponry on your back, and the ability to take on gangs and survive. If you're the Brainer, you can reach into peoples' minds and tangle up their wires. If you're the Savvyhead, then machines *\*talk\** to you, and they tell you their secrets (and maybe the secrets of their owners). And all of this is wicked awesome.

Your second game is also pretty good. But it's kind of like the second movie in a series - *Die Hard 2*, for example, could stand up on its own as a film, but it's got to live up to *Die Hard*. You play a new playbook, you get new moves, but you kind of know what the game's like now.

The third game, I think, is where it starts to get samey. You're out here in another desert, in another hold, surrounded by another two or three gangs who want your water, with another complete half-wit in charge of everything and another ambitious guy somewhere in the hold trying to advance his own agenda by screwing up everyone else's.

That's no fun. Let's change that. How are we going to change that? By owning it.

In the first of three articles, I'm going to tell you how to own your game of *Apocalypse Word* by owning your world

## STEP ONE: OWN YOUR WORLD

Nine times out of ten[2] your world will be some sort of \*Mad Max\* derivative - small townships scattered across a desert, everyone travelling by Holden or Harley to get from place to place. You know why? It's archetypical. Blasted wastelands are a pretty common trait of the post-apocalypse.

Yeah, well, they get boring. Mix it up a bit. What else could your apocalypse look like? Here's a few examples:

### **Immaculate Apocalypse**

The apocalypse didn't wipe out buildings, structures, or even landscapes. Maybe the apocalypse was just a plague, or an neutron-bomb (realistic or cinematic). Maybe everyone just up-and-left, God knows where. The point is, you have this whole world left, either to decay naturally, or to be strangely preserved by weird forces.

**See also:** *I Am Legend* (2007), *Wall•E*

### **Snowpocalypse World**

...and now the world is completely covered by snow and ice. Just getting enough heat to survive is a problem. Can you venture outside at all without taking harm? What old, outdated tech are the holds running to keep their farms going, their houses heated?

**See also:** *Transarctica/The Ice Company*, *The Day After Tomorrow*

### **Spacepocalypse World**

Or maybe you're all trapped on a moon base, a massive sprawling space station, or a generation ship. Is this common knowledge? Do you know about Earth? Where does the maelstrom come from? Is it the stars speaking to you? And what other weird things lurk in the depths of the station?

**See also:** Ken Catran's *Deepwater* series, *Doctor Who: The Beast Below*, *Sunshine*

### **Deluge**

The Earth is now warmer and wetter than it ever was. It rains - all the time. Plants grow *everywhere*. People live on the archipelagoes and narrow strips of land that aren't overrun by jungle or underwater. What unique challenges do you face when the water gets everywhere, and nothing is dry?

**See also:** VSCA's *Deluge*[3]

## **NEXT ISSUE**

In our next Out of Character, I'm going to look at the apocalypse itself. How did it happen? What do we know? And how does that affect your characters? I'll also look into the weirdest bit of Apoc World - the maelstrom.

[1]: <http://www.apocalypse-world.com/>

[2]: Not actual statistics

[3]: <http://www.lulu.com/product/ebook/deluge/6329294>



GARETH REYNOLDS

**Players:** 2-4 (5 with the first expansion)

**Play time:** 60-90 minutes (approximately)

**Age range:** 10+

**Publisher:** Rio Grande Games

Galaxy Trucker is a game made up of three rounds. Each round consists of two parts: in the first, you get to build a spaceship, and in the second, you get to find out how badly you botched the job. That (to me) is the core of the game, and how I first describe it whenever asked. You play three rounds and whoever has the most money at the end wins.

To start, you'll be building your ship. The initial challenge is that everyone is building at the same time, from a pool of face down tiles. You're only allowed to take one tile at a time, adding it to your ship or putting it back, face up, in the central pool. Any of your opponents can take the tiles you've been putting back if they want them. Of course you'll find that the tiles they don't want start ending up face up in the pool, and may be of use to you. Moving faster and making the place/return decision quicker than your opponents means you'll get to see more tiles in the same amount of time and may manage to build your ship first.

Adding to your ship isn't quite as simple as just putting the tile you want on your board either. You start with a central tile that everything else must be built off, and each subsequent build must extend your ship. For example, it is not permitted to put engines at the base of your board until you have connections to those spaces, even though that's about the only place you'll want to put engines.

With over half a dozen tile types, half of which only provide benefit in certain positions and some not even permitted in others, you tend to find that each ship you build is missing something important. That often leads to overcompensation in the subsequent round.



There's also the issue of tile connections. If while building you join tiles that shouldn't be joined, you'll lose some of your ship before the second part of the round. This wastes effort, and means your ship will be smaller than everyone else's.

One last problem comes if you play with people that build faster than you: as soon as someone decides they are finished building they are allowed to turn over a timer. When the timer runs out, the round is over. The timer gets worse for the slow players in the later rounds.

Of course, just building a ship isn't all that interesting if you don't get to do something with it, and that's where the second part of each round comes in. Each of the three rounds has an increasing number of events that the players need to deal with. Those events range from the good (land on a planet and get goods to sell at the end of the round), through the mostly neutral (open space where you power engines and move forward on the track and maybe improve your relative position), right through to the outright bad (deal with meteors/cannon fire that may take off pieces of your ship).

These events aren't completely random: players are allowed to pause in their building to look through a portion of the event cards that will be dealt. However, in most games I've been a part of, it seems that simply building your ship as quickly as possible is the pressing issue.

Should you play?

If you like direct confrontation in your games this game could annoy you, as though you get to build ships with lasers you don't get to shoot the other players or steal their stuff. (Apparently this is changed in the second expansion.)

Similarly, if you prefer games where you need to think about what you're going to do the first part of each round will cause annoyance as there isn't time to think far ahead unless you're willing to have the smallest ship for the round.

If you have a sense of *schadenfreude* you'll probably enjoy your first few games with new players as events conspire to blow sections of their ships apart. (Yours as well, but that shouldn't matter.)

If you find that you work well under pressure you might find the first part of each round a good test of your abilities.

At the very least though I think everyone should give the game a go - playing just the first round will give you a good idea of how you'd enjoy the full game. And the more people that like it the better chance I have of getting to play more.



**MATTHEW HARWARD**

*"To See the World in a Grain of Sand, and Heaven in a Wild Flower..." ~ William Blake*

Ever thought of studying history? Put off by having to actually remember facts? Or how about that history all happens in the past, in a reality that is limited by, well, reality? You should try Microscope! Microscope is a game changer, it's a GM-less dice-less meta-gaming system designed for world building - it is pretty straight forward, very flexible, incredibly thought provoking, and above all surprisingly fun. The system is designed by indie RPG designer Ben Robbins and advertises itself as "a fractal role-playing game of epic histories".

The general idea of the game is that you create a world by creating its history. After getting a general idea of the type of history you want to create, you start with beginning and the ending conditions, bookends as the system names them. In our last game of Microscope, we started with corporations exploiting the Asteroid Belt for lucrative mining opportunities, and ended with the Belt being the new cradle of civilisation. While our game was centred on Earth's near future, we could equally well have picked a historical or more fantastical setting.

Play progresses in a standard clockwise manner with each player creating a new element of the history. All elements are a simple description written on a card. You can create a Period that succinctly describes an era in your history, this can be placed anywhere along the existing timeline, allowing you to design the world in a non-linear fashion. One of our periods looked at the increasing intelligence of machine labour and the debate and conflict it created as their status in society was called into question. To provide detail to each Period, players can create Events, these are specific occurrences that happen at some point during the Period. These help to flesh out the actual events in the history. At the start of our Period on the increase of machine intelligence, we had an Event - a computer with advanced intelligence becomes completely sentient and self aware, this causes panic among some faith groups.

The final element is the Scene, this allows for a section of dramatic role-playing that determines the answer to a question raised by an Event. Depending on the context, a

Scene could be anything where something happens or is decided - one of ours centred around an important board meeting of one of the largest corporations in our history, Innocenti Inc, who came to the conclusion that machine intelligences of the time actually had souls. Players take turns selecting important or interesting characters in the scene and then actually play it out until the initial question is answered.

If you're not yet thinking that this is something I have to play, there are a host of awesome features that help conceptual understanding of the world and make it incredibly fun to play - every element has a designation as to whether it is Light or Dark. This describes the tone of the element and is not necessarily related to the moral implications it imparts. This provides an additional ingredient that helps players understand the rationale behind each new element added into the game.

Each complete round of play has a lead player, the Lens, who provides the Focus for that round. All new elements have to be related to that Focus. We had focuses like Neural Augmentation and Populous Uprisings. This keeps player's actions aligned and allows for a more in depth look at the issues. There is no limit to the number of rounds that can be played, so the game could be run as a campaign, though it plays well in a single three hour session.

I found the game very compelling and interesting as the logical exercise as well as for the role-playing aspects. It's balanced and allows for groups of players with different experience levels. One of the thoughts I had before playing was that everyone would simply write down new elements and pass to the next player; however, the ability to explain each new element, the need to make the history consistent, the Focus, and the addition of Scenes makes it a pretty lively game with lots of inter-player interaction. Thoroughly recommended!

Want to get a copy and try it for yourself? Check out: <http://www.lamemage.com/>



ALAN DOWNWARD

*Reprinted with permission from <http://gameintheory.blogspot.com>*

Last night I played [The Kaiser's Pirates](#)[1] for the first time. The game is set in WWI and involves each player having control of three German 'pirate' vessels and three merchant vessels. Each turn players use can cards to active their pirate vessels, to try and sink merchant vessels, or play cards representing the British navy to try and sink opposing pirate vessels. After a few turn you get the hang of how things work and the game is relatively simple, except that the way that the rules and card text are written is often counter-intuitive and confusing. Also the colour palette used is quite pale and as such, although you can tell that your cards have different coloured backgrounds, you're not sure which is which.

An example of a poorly worded card is “QQQ”, the text on which reads: 'Automatically recognises a Raider after it intercepts a Merchantman.' This seems simple enough, however, when I tried to play it I was informed that I couldn't because it wasn't my Merchantman being attacked and a Reaction Card can only be played in response to your ships being attacked. To make matters worse, if you look in the rule book it says:

REACTION AND ASSIST CARDS: Some cards are “Reaction” cards, which are played in response to another player’s Action card, or are “Assist” cards, which are only played in combination with an Intercept!, Raider Mine attack, or submarine torpedo or mine attack. See section 3.3 for a summary explanation of all Action cards.

And if you go to section 3.3 it makes no mention of the “only when you are attacked” rule, but rather just has the card text for every card printed out. The relevant rule is 3.2.2 which states: “Reaction cards are played directly from the defending player’s hand in response to an Action card.”

This issue could easy be avoided by better wording on the cards. Changing “QQQ” to read “Automatically recognises a Raider after it intercepts a Merchantman under your control”, although rules wise redundant, prevents confusion. There were several other cards that

had similar issues, often caused by the choice of language used, such as “immediately” being used to mean “immediately after what is happening has finished”. This experience just reminded me of how common it is for game developers to write the rules and then shortly after publication having to write an FAQ, because the instructions were not unambiguous.

The 3rd of December 2011 edition of *New Scientist* has an article entitled “Time to think like a computer”. This article discusses the way that people think and communicate to each other, and makes the observation that if you want to communicate with people in a clear and obvious way then you should talk like a computer - that is, use conditional logic. For example, rather than writing a rule which says “players may not have more than seven cards in hand” you should write something like “if a player with seven cards in hand is instructed to draw more cards then that player draws no card”. While this is more long winded, it does explain how to cope with conflicting game instructions.

I think that the reasons most developers write rules in a more trimmed-down manner is because they know the rules perfectly, and they think that the rule book should be engaging and fun to read. In reality, the rule book is usually only read by one of the players, who then explains it to the rest. Then, with the exception of checking the occasional thing, it is never read again. Personally I believe that the answer is to write each rule in the short hand way but with the long winded “logical conditional” form immediately below it.

1: <http://www.gmtgames.com/p-226-the-kaisers-pirates.aspx>

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|  | <p>Ladies and Gentlemen, we're pleased to announce that <b>Comics Compulsion</b>, your one-stop gaming store, is offering discounts for SAGA members once again this year. Show them your card to receive tasty discounts on their already low prices for comics, wargames and board games.</p> <p>Comics Compulsion<br/>58 Main North Road, Papanui<br/><a href="http://www.comicscompulsion.co.nz/">http://www.comicscompulsion.co.nz/</a></p> |
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