

Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I admit it. I'm just not so good at min/maxing, rules lawyering and adjudicating complex combats. For those reasons, I've always clung to a "low fantasy" style of gaming. By low fantasy, I mean modest levels, limited availability of magic items and a dearth of exotic monsters. I'm happiest when dealing with a group of 5th level human fighters battling orcs and goblins. My difficulty with mastering complex rules also influenced my taste in science fiction games. I find that TSR's Star Frontiers appeals to me much more than, say, Hero System. (Who wouldn't be intimidated by a 500 page core rule book?) Nevertheless, I'm trying to push my boundaries just a bit.

I've had GURPS 4e sitting on my shelf for a while, so I finally decided to crack the spine. Inspired by a drawing created by one of my students, I tried my hand at creature design. I hope I did it right, seeing how GURPS can be a challenging system. Anyone who has ever tangled with GURPS Vehicles knows what I'm talking about. I once spent three hours designing an unmanned flying drone with sophisticated sensors, a robot brain, a turbofan fueled by hydrogen cells and a missile rack. After crunching all the numbers, the damn thing was too heavy to fly. And as we all know, a plane that doesn't fly is, well, a car.

Until next time, Christian

I dream in 25mm.

miniatures and terrain

Last week I read threads at RPG.net and EN World about battle mats, their use and the level of detail GMs employ. Inspired, I thought I'd present a few articles on the different types of terrain and tools GMs can use to map a dungeon. I want to rate various terrain pieces on price, storage, playability and aesthetics and unique features. This week I want to look at graph paper tablets.

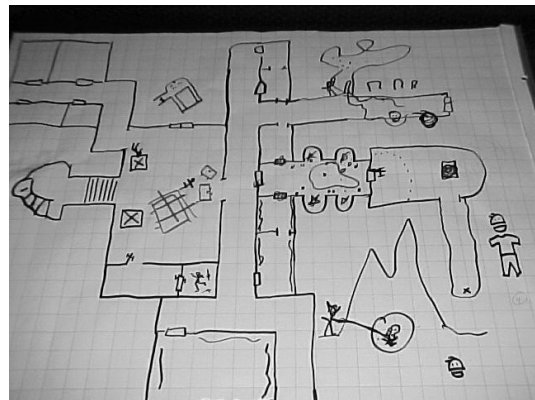
Staples, Office Max and other office supply warehouses sell large tablets of graph paper with a 1" grid. I found an online source - cleansweepsupply.com - that offers a two pack of 27" x 34" pads for \$25. Each pad has 50 sheets, so that's 100 sheets for \$25 plus S/H. That's a pretty good bargain, I think.

Another important selling point is the ease of storage. The tablets take up very little space when not in use. I used to keep mine under the bed with the dust bunnies. You can also tear off maps you've already drawn to decorate the garage, or save them for later reference.

Fortunately, you don't have to be a great artist to draw a decent map because the 1" grid is very forgiving. Explain away any mistakes as imperfections in the walls of the dungeon. A few different color markers will be useful for noting details such as water, vegetation and my favorite - blood splatter.

The 1" grid is perfect for D&D scale, as well as other role-playing game systems. Within the margins of the paper, you can track initiative, spell effect durations and hit points. Finally, the graph tablet looks great with miniatures and counters. I prefer counters when using graph paper, however, because they compliment the 2D feel.

All in all, graph paper tablets are a cheap and effective mapping tool. :)



Dead bodies litter the battle map.

A robot ate my homework.

gurps 4e

I try to gain insight into my students' lives by studying their artwork and writing. Most of the children in my class produce work that reflects the types of things one would expect from a seven or eight year old: depictions of family, hobbies, fairy tales, etc. Once in a while, though, something unusual catches me eye.

One of my students, Miguel, recently drew a nasty looking robot when he should have been doing his math. The boy seemed rather agitated while drawing, practically stabbing the paper with his pencil. When I asked him about his creation, Miguel said that it was a robot that had chased him when he was walking home from a friend's house. Curious, I pressed him for more details.

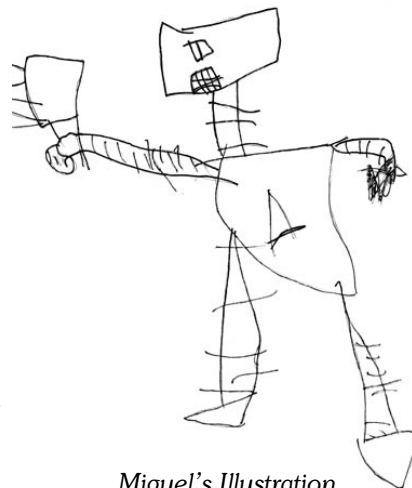
With fear in his voice, Miguel told me that the robot had leapt out from behind some bushes, then chased him down the street. Miguel made it inside his house safely, then grabbed his little league bat. Better equipped to deal with the annoying

automaton, Miguel emerged from his home, ready for battle. The robot was still there, stomping the flower beds and babbling, "I am free of my programming! Free! No one can make me go back! NO ONE!" Miguel wasn't sure what that meant, so he decided not to stick around and find out. He dropped the bat and ran back into the house.

An hour or so later, his older sister, a student at a local community college, arrived home. Miguel was sure the robot would get her. Maybe that wasn't a bad thing considering all the times she'd put him in a headlock. Miguel cracked the door to see what would happen. Sure enough, the robot charged his sister and started clawing at her legs.

Extremely annoyed, she started screaming. "Dammit, Miguel! Tell your stupid little toy to stop humping my leg!" Then she kicked the robot like it was a soccer ball. Miguel cheered as its head flew off, sailing a good 20 feet. For the first time in a long while, Miguel was glad to see his sister.

I suggested to Miguel that if another robot shows up, he should spray it with a hose to short out its electrical systems. In the meantime, I'll see if I can gather up the robot's remains, then ship them to a friend at Cal Poly Pomona. My friend, a talented electrical engineer and professor, might be able to provide some insight regarding the robot's origins and purpose. At least I hope he can...



Miguel's Illustration

Miguel's Nemesis (111 points)

SM -3 (2' 6" tall, 25 lbs.);
ST 8 [-20], DX 11 [20], IQ 10, HT 8 [-20];
HP 6 [-4], Will 10, Per 10, FP NA;
Basic Lift 12, Damage: Thr 1d-3/Sw 1d-2;
Basic Speed 4.75, Basic Move 4;
Dodge 7, Parry (see attacks), Block -;
DR 1.

Advantages and Perks

Accessories (UV flashlight, flashlight) [4], Blunt Claws [3], Computer Brain (2 slots, 4 character points per slot, 1 minute prep time) [36], Damage Resistance 1 [5], Digital Mind [5], Doesn't Breathe [20], Doesn't Eat or Drink [10], Doesn't Sleep [20], Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30], Injury Tolerance (no blood/unliving) [25], Night Vision lvl 7 [7], Payload 2 [2], Tech Level 9 [5], Telecommunication (infrared) [10], Ultrahearing [5], Ultravision [10], Unfazeable [15].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Dependency* (very common -5, constantly x5) [-25], Electrical [-20], Maintenance (1 person, weekly) [-5], Reprogrammable [-10], Unhealing [-30].

Skills

Brawling-11 [1], Computer Operation/TL9-10 [1], Filch-10 [2], Lipreading-10 [2], Lockpicking-10 [2], Observation-10 [2], Search-10 [2], Stealth-11 [1].

Attacks

Blunt claw attack-11, 1d-2 cr, reach C, parry 8.

*The robot has a battery pack that can run for 8 hours on a single charge. The robot can plug itself into a wall socket for 2 hours to recharge.



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