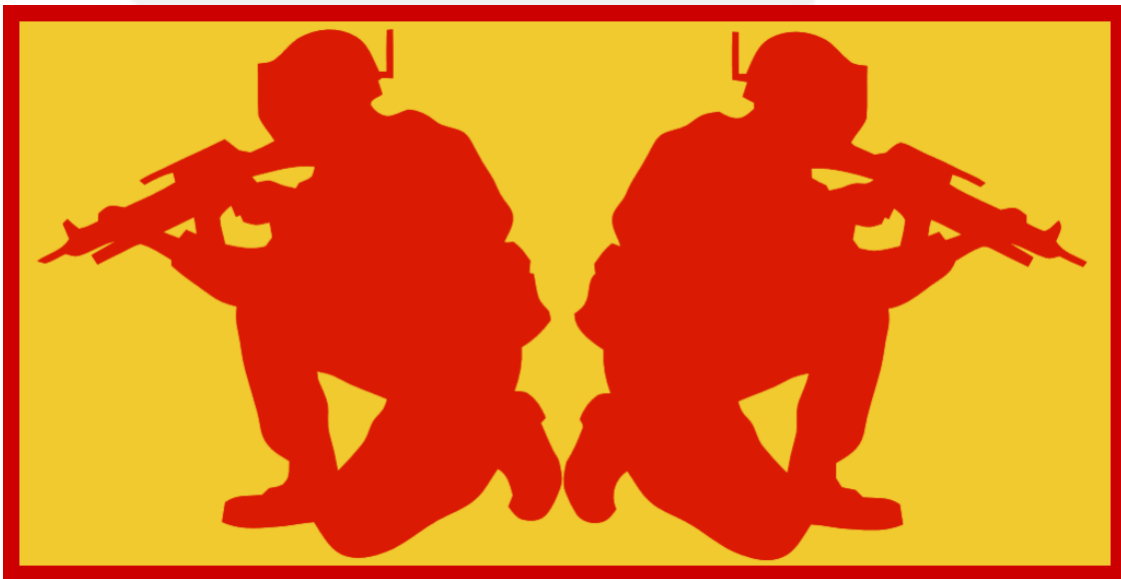


THE UNIVERSE ACCORDING TO DUCK!

THE GALACTIC SOCIAL HISTORIAN



BOOKLET 5 OF 8



1. WHAT IS THIS GAME ABOUT?
2. PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THIS GAME
3. BUILD A UNIVERSE
4. AN EXAMPLE : THE DF UNIVERSE

1. WHAT IS THIS GAME ABOUT ?

This game is intended to be a fun and cheap hybrid of many other games set in a Sci-Fi milieu.

-DUCK! uses 54mm, 1/32, 1/35 scale figures and tabletop scenic elements and dice. You must print and makeup some simple playing aids to ease the progress of play.

Squad Leader involves super-detailed tactics. Dungeons and Dragons involves super-detailed characterisation and negotiation of the game play. These elements are blended with figure-gaming to produce something inspired by Starship Troopers and Alien but achievable without a massive cash outlay.

The idea with DUCK! is that you create your own universe around a basic scenario you develop for yourself. Two people can develop entirely different **-DUCK!** Universes to game in. An important aspect is that the game is suitable for solitaire, two-player, multi-player or playing as a team.

You should get some figures and scenery and play a bit before you theorise too much about your universe. The game will suggest answers to your questions or ask new ones as you play.

The rules are called '--DUCK!' and stem from the following premises -

1. 54mm 1/35 1/32 Army Men scale
2. The Universe is a 'hard' sci fi one : no super-doooper mental powers, no magic, no 'rays' or 'beams' . Technology must have an Achilles heel. Only the JET drive is presently unthinkable.
3. No life forms with human-level intelligence have been found. The most advanced enemy can only use simple weapons. The most deadly adversary is...other humans.
4. There is combat but there is also problem-solving and non-combat action along with characterisation of the figures - blend D&D, Squad Leader without excessive detail or overwrought technicalities.
5. Teams can be progressed, their career followed but no 'levels' or power enhancement.

The main books I have in mind are Starship Troopers, The Forever War, Bill the Galactic Hero and The Tunnels of Cu Chi. Games are Sorcerer's Cave, Sniper and the 'Aliens' boardgame.

Figure scale is large to allow easy and rapid painting. It also allows scenic elements to be made without being too fiddly. On the other hand if you WANT to go mad with detail at this scale you can, and it is repaid more than in 15mm or 25 or 28(what is that scale !?).

Cheapnis is important. All must be possible without a big outlay and construction, scratch-building and conversion encouraged.

Developments are to allow other environments such as tunnels and jungle. And to introduce intelligent alien races.

GAME PHILOSOPHY

The game is individually developed by you guided by these booklets. The figures and scenic elements can be made from anything to hand or bought at the greatest expense, as you wish.

YOU decide the rules.

It is NOT necessary to visualise all aspects of your game universe before you start to play. You will discover details as you play.

Form X : GOOD VERSUS EVIL

WHAT IS YOUR MEGACORP ?

WHO ARE YOUR TEAM ?

WHAT IS YOUR THREAT ?

WHAT IS YOUR MEGACORP ?

All far-future sci-fi has a lurking omnipowerful villain- the Megacorp. The Megacorp is hated by independent heroes but unavoidable because it has all the jobs, cash, know-how and stuff.

Why is your Megacorp in existence? Is it an industrial complex or an aristocratic empire ?

What is its structure ? Is it based all over or at strongpoints ?

In any event the Megacorp MUST be your financier and employer. Or you lose.

WHO ARE YOUR TEAM ?

Players are members in a team or fraternity which fulfils a combat role to defend the Megacorp, and Humanity as a whole, from an alien force.

Your team must be specialists of some sort who can deal with the threat. Colonial Marines can be dug up from Aliens and rejuvenated but use your imagination. Special police? Drug control? Anti-pirate Special Forces? Rapid Response Anti-Alien SWAT? Pacification Representatives? Underwater Engineers? Border Protection?

Once you have a title this will help with identifying the personnel. Elite or Ad Hoc? Hard-Bitten or Green? A total mix ? A Colonists Militia ? Men, women, aliens ?

WHO ARE YOUR THREAT?

You have the whole pantheon of sci-fi baddies to choose from. I like the Pest Control pretext because I can use a variety of noisome aliens. You could have a single enemy such as 'Bugs' or Space Pirates who turn up in different contexts. The enemy you choose must also be available to deploy on the table. Cheap models that look ok are necessary. Buy them or convert them.

Candidates :

INFESTING ALIEN SPECIES

REBELLING COLONISTS

SMUGGLERS OR PIRATES

RIVAL COMPANY/POWER TEAMS WANTING THE SAME OBJECTIVE

ESCAPED SPECIMENS ON THE WAY TO ZOO OR LAB

CREATURES MUTATED BY EXPERIMENTS GONE WRONG OR DISEASE

SPECIES ACCIDENTALLY TRANSPORTED MUTATED IN NEW ENVIRONMENT

EXPERIMENTAL MILITARY CYBORGS OR CREATURES GONE WRONG AND ESCAPED

Form Y : SCENE OF THE CRIME

WHY IS THE ARENA FOR COMBAT AN ABANDONED SPACESHIP?

HOW DID THINGS GET LIKE THIS ?

WHY IS THE ARENA FOR COMBAT AN ABANDONED SPACESHIP?

The pretext of the game is that the fighting is across various spaceships. The modular/tile approach I use to construct the battlefield can be adapted in other directions:

- The tunnels of a Bug colony
- The tunnels of mines on a planet or asteroid
- The confines of a future city
- The modules of a planetary base
- The clearings in a jungle
- The caves of an alien planet
- Undersea amongst weed forest or caves or wrecks
- Inside a massive alien creature

Decide and then you can construct your models and scenery appropriately. Watch the Blog for ideas too.

HOW DID IT GET LIKE THIS ?

Having got this far, you need the raison d'être for the fighting.

Why and how did your Megacorp encounter the baddies ?

Why did the fighting begin and why is it still going on?

What will bring it to an end or maintain the status quo ?

Form Z : AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

WHAT DOES YOUR MEGACORP WANT FROM YOUR TEAM ?

WHAT DOES A TYPICAL MISSION ENTAIL ?

WHAT DO THE TEAM AIM TO ACHIEVE FOR MEGACORP?

This is almost answered if you know the whys and wherefores from the previous section.

How do your individual tabletop battles fit together to achieve an end to the fighting ?

Does the team have an almost unending task of rushing to stop random outbreaks of aliens in different parts of the galaxy? You could be carrying out a systematic containment and eradication an alien invasion. You could be quelling a piratical insurrection of unhappy colonists. Etc.

WHAT IS TO BE ACHIEVED ON A SINGLE GAME-MISSION?

There must be an end to each tabletop game too. Capture the ship ? Blow up the mine ? Recapture the crystals ? Take some prisoners or rescue some ? Some pattern needs to be established or you will never be able to devise or finish your games.. You need 'Victory Conditions' that can be varied but at the same time tell you what your figures are doing in the tunnels or ships or jungle.

- Rescue crewmen or hostages
- Sweep for survivors
- Obtain a specimen for study
- Eradicate an alien species colony/nest
- Kill/capture smugglers/pirates/rebels
- Recover ship/complex
- Destroy ship/complex
- Stop ship's progress or machine's working
- Steal/recover data, technology, items, material

The starting point will usually be when your Team is in the airlock ready to board and explore the mystery spaceship.

The end point of a game will usually be when your Team is safely off the spaceship - back on their own vessel.

Write something down!

Few of us are R. L. Stevenson or H. G. Wells reincarnated. But everyone can simply record a few lines appropriate to each of the paragraphs above. Even a few key words will help you retain the skeleton of the scenario which is your galaxy. You will most likely also find the process of setting up the game, recording it, and writing it up are as enjoyable as the gaming itself!

Do not try to fill out all the forms at once. Mull over your concepts a little. Let your imagination run wild. Once you fill in the forms feel free to change them again. After a game or two or a day or two of thinking or after the time it takes to get the figures and scenery ready you will add or modify your Forms.

A small answer can be added-to and gradually become a comprehensive one.

BLOG IT! Let others know what you are doing. Set up a SIMPLE blog and drop the URL at a few forums or other blogs as a comment to make a network of like minds.

The recording of your games will give you reference material for future games and highlight where you need to add detail or fill gaps.

If you are a solo gamer or if you are in a group it is more enjoyable if you share your game experiences.

DUCK! Is meant to be cheerful and cheap and but still have a valid Sci-Fi core and a playable wargame at its heart.

You do not have to have all the answers before you start playing or you can change your mind as you go along until a scenario gels for you.

Form X : GOOD VERSUS EVIL

WHAT IS YOUR MEGACORP ?

WHO ARE YOUR TEAM ?

WHAT IS YOUR THREAT ?

Form Y : SCENE OF THE CRIME

WHY IS THE ARENA FOR COMBAT AN ABANDONED SPACESHIP?

HOW DID THINGS GET LIKE THIS ?

Form Z : AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

WHAT DOES YOUR MEGACORP WANT FROM YOUR TEAM ?

WHAT DOES A TYPICAL MISSION ENTAIL ?

AN EXAMPLE FOR YOUR INFORMATION

My own primary -DUCK! Universe is that of Deep Freight. A colonising scenario where one megacorp controls all space travel.

FORM X

FORM Y

FORM Z

DEEP FREIGHT CORPORATION

THE DEEP FREIGHT TOTOPOLY

Oberon M'Tunga was the legendary entrepreneur who established the basis for DF's pre-eminent place as the transporter and communicator of humanity as it now stands scattered across the galaxy in 3357.

The lowly engineer worked for Gradgrind Industries in Birminghamington, Chad, for years before going alone with his only patent : the Vibrating Limb Stresser. Extended periods of weightlessness were proved to damage the skeleton so thoroughly that at one stage it looked like humans were stuck within a maximum 3 year limit for weightlessness before limbs were so weakened by decalcification that spontaneous fractures became so frequent they spelt death. The VLS could be strapped on and stimulated calcification in the limb enough to stave-off decalcification indefinitely when combined with a bone-friendly diet.

It was simple, effective, cheap to make and cost a fortune.

Space travel exploded. The sales of VLS equipments also exploded. It so happened that the production costs were so low and the demand so high Oberon M'Tunga was flooded with cash. He used it wisely. Just when the major Earth corporations were stricken with a credit crisis due to their investing massively in atmospheric clean-up just before the key to interstellar travel had been found. He bought shares in all the orbiting construction facilities which could make and repair interstellar ships. The positive feedback effect as the race to the nearest inhabitable worlds took hold from an overpopulated and polluted earth was unprecedented.

Holding fast to his strategy of investing in the means of building and repairing interstellar vessels M'Tunga gained massive economic and thus political power. Unconfined by a single location his corporation became untouchable. Military complexes never got a foot in space because colonisation was peaceful. No intelligent competing life forms have been found to date on planets targetted for colonisation. Deep Freight took care of the transportation of people and stuff out to the colonies and allowed colonies to trade their products, at a price.

The only worm in the bud was that if one owns all interstellar transport and that transport is then in contact with many alien life forms, some of which are unwelcome, then the job of cleaning up

unwanted travellers also falls on...you. DF had to constitute the Verminator Corps.



SPACE INFESTED

The first problem on the deep spae trading lanes was an alien species which shoots egg pods out from planets, asteroids and spaceships it contaminates. If an egg pod hits a ship it melts through the hull, sealing the hole behind it and starts to hatch Harpies which attack the crew. The captured crew are cocooned and used as food to create more Harpies and a Queen which will then send egg pods into space to continue the cycle.

Your mission is to lead a boarding party onto a ship which does not respond to communications or has been deserted by a traumatized crew. There could be Harpies aboard. You must secure the ship.



You and your men are specially trained to fight the tough, relentless and scary Harpies. You have special weapons and skills. You are Verminators.

Verminators are employed by The Deep Freight corporation who always want the job done yesterday for next to no cost. A ship standing still is not earning for Deep Freight. Any infestation of Harpies must be stamped-out as rapidly as possible to reduce any disruption of galactic trade timetables. Get the job done fast and bonuses are enormous. But

remember, a moment's lack of concentration against this enemy can lead to your Verminator team becoming lunch for the Harpies.

The appearance of the Verminators is characteristically un-uniform. Bits of various generations of body armour and personal choice add to an uneven equipment supply makes them generally recognisable but everyone has his own favourite kit. The latest tech is mixed with old and reliable gear and even the odd antique - heavy cutlasses, for example, make good close combat weapons to smash the Harpies' teeth and hands without spilling too much caustic blood. A side-effect of this is that the private mercenaries of Deep Freight look like a dishevelled bunch next to Confederation Sentinels (more detail later ;) and have been sometimes labelled 'Vermin' or 'Verms' instead of Verminators. Cynics say this is the real origin of their name, and if a team of such misfits is lost not even an accountant will weep over them. For the same reason ammo is never abundant and gear can fail or be hard to get hold of. You must take any chance to find materiel on the ship.

NATURAL HISTORY OF THE HARPIES (*Xenocarnifex sauroviatoris*)

The Harpies evolved on a distant planet as a semi-social species with a horde of individuals working to feed and protect an egg-laying 'Queen'. The Queen is a slug-like, helpless individual Harpy which cannot move and only lays eggs. The eggs are laid in a hidden 'Hive' usually in an inaccessible place. In ships this place is usually between bulkheads, behind machinery or in ceilings-floors. Once the entrance is located Verminators merely have to post a fire-bomb in the Hive to eradicate it. The problem is locating it!

Harpies are related to insects and to lizards but took a strange evolutionary turn when DF installed a spaceport on their planet. It turned out that the Harpy Queen's strategy of shooting eggs into the air during storms to spread the species round their planet was triggered by the blast of launching spaceships and some eggs were taken into space. Where their thick casing allowed them to survive. Each egg pod is a cluster of half a dozen eggs in a tough case which has a sac of caustic gel at one end. On contact with a surface the sac explodes and the pod is sucked into the hole it eats in any contacted substance. The usual process of Harpy eggs etching their way into thick tree-trunks on their home planet before hatching works even on the plating of spaceships and the menace began to spread in the busiest space-lane junctions.

Harpies have an extremely tough constitution and a bizarre metabolism which means they have extremely caustic bodily fluids.

This liquid is deadly to most other life forms and causes at least severe burns when it comes into contact.

The last egg in the pod is fed with composted organic matter and will become a queen which then lays more eggs. When she has been fed enough organic matter she develops an explosive *ovicaster* which will shoot a series of egg pods into the air or into space before she dies. The queen is a soft-bodied slug-like creature which never leaves the hive.

The Hive Entrance is built up of hardened slime mixed with bones, excrement and found debris. It is visible extending from a gap in plating over where the Harpy hive is located.

It is a tube-like structure which can expand or contract to regulate temperature in the hive.

The Hive entrance is often protected by a large male Harpy known as the Bull.

No human has entered a hive and emerged. The only decontamination method that works is incineration. Damage to any ship is limited because the automatic fire-control kicks-in and protects all vital areas while the hive, queen and eggs are incinerated.

THE FOLLOWING RULES CONFORM TO THE BACKGROUND STORY GIVEN ABOVE WHICH I DEVELOPED ON THE BASIC SKELETON ...

DO YOU KNOW ...?

- WHAT IS YOUR MEGACORP ?
- WHO ARE YOUR HEROES ?
- WHO ARE YOUR VILLAINS?
- WHAT IS THE ARENA FOR COMBAT?
- HOW DID IT GET LIKE THIS ?
- WHAT DO THE HEROES AIM TO ACHIEVE FOR MEGACORP?
- WHAT SHOULD A GAME MISSION ACHIEVE?