

BATTLECHAT

XANADU

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Well, without a doubt, the biggest news of my recent life is the birth of my new son, Kenyon Aleksandr (Loren 'really' needs to learn how to spell...). I'd like to thank everyone for their wonderful thoughts and words. Of course, as magical as it is to hold my new son, just like Xanadu, the 'blessings' of a new child (as all of you with kids know), bring with them their fair share of curses as well...I'd like to publicly thank Herb Beas for the great Assistant Developer he is and for making sure that things like play testing and future products kept forward motion over the last few weeks; for some reason I'm really tired and missed long days at my computer. So, we're all home, son and mom are doing fine, and I'm struggling to get back on top of things, knowing the curses just make the blessing all the more cherished. So, enough of that and on to what you guys really want to hear about.

First and foremost, I'd like to thank all of those that make BattleTech look good by their hard work at conventions. When I was at FASA, I was always the guy putting together all the material for the big summer conventions, writing up scenarios, actually running them and so on. Now, however, I simply don't have the time, but many a good men have stepped up to the plate and are hitting homer after homer. See Ben Rome's write-up (posted to the site) on the wonderful time that Classic BattleTech had at the 2004 Origins convention. (And as you all know from BattleChats a year ago or so, I've always felt that the aerospace side of BattleTech got the short shift, so seeing the aerotech scenarios, run with the newly revised AeroTech 2, and a full line of aerotech miniatures...made my whole week and then some!). Thanks to all of the commandos and convention people that provide that key human element to bring in new players and keep the old!

So, just glad it's not end of summer yet, as the schedule is still playing faster and looser than a Canopian Pleasure Circus in Combine space. While making headway in some areas, others have slipped again.

A Guide to Covert Ops should be hitting game store shelves any day now.

Mercenaries Supplemental ran into its own share of curses (wonder if *A Guide to Covert Ops* hates lucrewarriors, or something, and spilled karma?), with PC to MAC translation issues suddenly jumping up to bite us once more. To try and avoid this ugly situation in the future, I'm actually going to be switching over to MAC use...sigh...going to miss those computer games (wait, I haven't played a computer game in months...). So, barring any 'new' unforeseen issues, it will hit store shelves in August; find a preview of the color section on the site.

Map Set Compilation 2 is slowly being worked on...at this point, if I see it before the end of the year, I'll be happy.

I hate having to make these decisions, but that's part of the job. *MapPack: Solaris VII* simply had to be put on hold, so *Handbook: House Steiner* could make Gen Con. *House Steiner* heads off to the printers at the end of this week, which means layout will immediately be able to redirect energies at getting the MapPack done.

Historical: War of 3039 should be back from layout by the end of the month and then its out to proofers.

Handbook: House Steiner is on schedule! Now, I try really hard not to be biased (I'm awful close to it, after all) but I'm beginning to believe that *Handbook: House Steiner* just might set a new standard for quality of content, art and layout. We've really tried to take this product up to a new level and...well...you guys be sure and let me know what you think, as we've a pile more of these books to do and I'd like your opinions in getting there. As such, we'll go ahead and start now, with a preview of the TOC...plenty more previews of the book coming each week.

The Limited Edition, leather-bound 20 Year Anniversary *BattleTech Master Rules, Revised* is at the printers. Just to clarify, though it premiers at Gen Con, this product WILL be available for sale through normal distribution and retail channels. Also to clarify, the body of this product is identical to the recently published hardback *BMR*; it simply gets a leather-bound, silver foil-stamped cover, along with a very cool full-color page letting you know what number you purchased (check out a preview of that page on the site).

Combat Equipment has finished playtesting (about time!) and is heading to editing as I type this.

Finally, I thought I'd try something a little different, giving you a peak behind the door, so to speak. As all of you know, FanPro is in the process of developing *Technical Readout: 3055 Upgrade*. From now until the end of the year when it publishes, I thought I'd layout how a product is developed from one end to the other. That way you'll get a glimpse of what it takes to develop a product, while getting some nice previews of what should be a great product.

So, without further ado, let's jump in:

Behind Technical Readout: 3055 Upgrade

Any product begins as an idea. Some are incredibly nebulous and take weeks of bouncing around between the developers and authors before it really begins to jell into something that can be put into an outline. Often it is not so much the subject matter that remains nebulous, but the final form in which it will be presented; not to mention the constant fight of getting as much info as possible into a somewhat reasonable page count (as many of you know, I've 'problems' with keeping my page counts down). Such products include *Combat Operations, Historical: War of 3039*, a new product coming called *Interstellar Players* and of course *Dawn of the Jihad* (again, 'what' the *Dawn of the Jihad* is all about is easy, but what form the book will take...well, we're several weeks and pushing a hundred e-mails and we've finally got an almost final form of the outline, and those e-mails will multiply by magnitudes once drafts start coming in, not to mention the fact-checkers start sinking their teeth into them as well...).

Others come right out fully fleshed and lend themselves to an outline readily. Most of these usually fall into the category of books in an already established series, such as *Field Manual: Mercenaries, Revised*, or *Technical Readout: 3055 Upgrade*. Technical Readouts are particularly nice, as the page count, once you set it in the outline, never varies (see above for my issues with page count).

Once an idea has been considered, tossed around and 'approved' by The Man (even I've got one, albeit one that gives me tremendous freedom), an outline is generated. However, even for the 'easy' outlines, sometimes it can go through several iterations, as you try and find the best way to present the information. Often outlines are revised midway through the writing process, as it becomes apparent what the needs of the product are. Again, with a Technical Readout, we usually don't have to deal with that.

Now for *Technical Readout: 3055 Upgrade*, the initial 'idea' was simple: we had to redraw all the non-Omni Clan 'Mechs in *TR: 3055*, similar to what occurred with *TR: Project Phoenix*; not the usual way an idea is generated, but you roll with the punches.

Once I had that, I started working on the outline. However, I happen to also be looking through the Economics section of *Handbook: House Steiner* and noticed all the start-up design firms on Solaris VII and that reminded me that many of those firms (like VEST) first appeared in *TR: 3055*.

As I'm always one for cross promoting, I quickly realized we had a golden opportunity to connect with the fiction already established in *TR: 3055*—not to mention getting back into print all the previously published Solaris VII 'Mech designs—while connecting with the soon-to-be-published *MapPack: Solaris VII*.

Finally, as I've been trying to push the boundaries (while not breaking, of course) of what's been done before, I realized that the time had come to publish some 'official' Level 3 designs, using weapons and equipment from *Maximum Tech* (of course), but also highlighting the new weapons and equipment from *MapPack: Solaris VII*.

Course, all of that meant that the book would likely be too big to include the Clan OmniFighters, but I've wanted to do a aerospace fighter only Technical Readout for a while (including 'upgrades' to existing fighters, with new ones as well), so this simply provided additional impetus; out with the fighters.

So, with all of that in mind, below you'll find the final outline (off of which I contacted artists and authors to contract art and the all important text to fill out a book).

SECTION	PAGECOUNT
TITLE PAGE	01
00 TOC/CREDITS	02-03
02 INTRODUCTION	04-05
03 INNER SPHERE MECHS INTRODUCTION	06-07
01 Fireball	08-09
02 Dart	10-11
03 Tarantula	12-13
04 Battle Hawk	14-15
05 Hammer	16-17
06 Hitman	18-19
07 Jackal	20-21
08 Scarabus	22-23
09 Hollander	24-25
10 Venom	26-27
11 Daimyo	28-29
12 Watchman	30-31
13 Komodo	32-33
14 Snake	34-35
15 Stealth	36-37
16 Huron Warrior	38-39
17 Nightsky	40-41

18 Apollo	42-43
19 Grim Reaper	44-45
20 Wraith	46-47
21 Anvil	48-49
22 Tempest	50-51
23 Daikyu	52-53
24 Gallowglas	54-55
25 Hercules	56-57
26 Thunder	58-59
27 Bandersnatch	60-61
28 Falconer	62-63
29 Penetrator	64-65
30 Rakshasa	66-67
31 War Dog	68-69
32 Salamander	70-71
33 Gunslinger	72-73
34 Albatross	74-75
35 Cerberus	76-77
36 Naginata	78-79
37 Berserker	80-81
38 Grand Titan	82-83
04 CLAN OMNIMECH INTRODUCTION	84-85
01 Phantom	86-87
02 Pouncer	88-89
03 Linebacker	90-91
04 Naga	92-93
05 PROJECT PHOENIX (WOB IS MECHS) INTRODUCTION	94-95
01 Nexus	96-97
02 Raijin	98-99
03 Grand Crusader	100-101
06 PROJECT PHOENIX (CLAN MECHS) INTRODUCTION	102-103
01 Baboon	104-105
02 Vixen	106-107
03 Jenner IIC	108-109
04 Peregrine	110-111
05 Hellhound	112-113
06 Goshawk	114-115
07 Galahad	116-117
08 Viper	118-119
09 Behemoth	120-121
10 Kraken	122-123
07 PROJECT PHOENIX SOLARIS VII (LEVEL 3 MECHS) INTRODUCTION	124-125
01 NEW 20 ton	126-127
02 Koto	128-129
03 Copperhead	130-131
04 Flashfire	132-133
05 NEW 30 ton	134-135
06 Mantis	136-137
07 NEW 35 ton	138-139
08 Longshot	140-141
09 Tsunami	142-143
10 Werewolf	144-145
11 Daedalus	146-147
12 NEW 45 ton	148-149
13 Bombard	150-151
14 Ronin	152-153
15 NEW 55 ton	154-155
16 Paladin	156-157
17 NEW 60 ton	158-159
18 Morpheus	160-161
19 NEW 70 ton	162-163
20 Onslaught	164-165

21 Cudgel	166-167
22 Sasquatch	168-169
23 Juggernaut	170-171
24 Colossus	172-173
25 NEW 100 ton	174-175
IWM AD	176

So, next month I'll touch on the next stage process, providing information on both the text and art.

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