

STACKING THEM UP

-Reviews

RAGE

Collectible Card Game
Published by White Wolf Games
Reviewed by Chris Johnson
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Yet another trading card game (can you say 'bandwagon' boys and girls?) is the eagerly awaited **Rage**, based on White Wolf's popular *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* roleplaying game.

Werewolves (Garou) spend much of their time fighting the Wyrms which is anything that they believe is tainted with a spirit that wishes to destroy the Earth, or Gaia. Garou believe vampires are "of the Wyrms" (though the jury is still out on that point) thus most vampires try to avoid being spotted by a Garou. Warring with the Wyrms is not the only Garou pastime. Divided into groups (or packs), Garou spend a large amount of time warring amongst themselves trying to raise their pack's, and their own, standing (Renown). Enough with the background, onto the card game itself.

First impressions, that would be the Art and card design, were good. White Wolf have enlisted the talent of many good artists, including a few of my favourites; Drew Tucker, Richard Kane Ferguson & Quinton Hoover all have work in there, and, based on his work for **Rage**, I believe I will look out for Lawrence Allen Williams' work in the future. The card design complements the artwork nicely, with various Glyphs decorating each well thought out card. My only complaint in this area is that you can't read the artist's name on the Gift cards.

There are three main types of cards; Garou, Combat and Sept. Garou cards are double sided with the breed form - wolf (Lupus) or human (Homid) - on one side and the werewolf (Crinos) form on the reverse side. When a Character takes damage equal or greater to her Rage she flips over to Crinos form and becomes much more dangerous. Each Character has four main stats; Renown, value in votes (Moots); Rage, ability to fight; Gnosis, spiritual strength; and Health. Other information on the card includes Breed, Tribe and Auspice. Auspice is the phase of the moon the Garou was born under. Combat cards are the way that Garou inflict damage on their opponents, each card requires that the werewolf has a certain Rage, and may inflict a certain damage. Sept cards make up the rest, that is all the non-combat, non-werewolf cards. They include Actions, Equipment, Gifts, Allies, Enemies, Events, Moots, Rites and Past Lives. Much too much to fully explain all of them here.

Now I'll explain my favourite concept in this game. *You don't have to beat up your friends*. I know this is a turn off for some of you, but after a pathetic game of Magic where none of us actually wanted to attack, the ability to beat up something other than the person you want a ride home with is quite a bonus. What you can do is play Enemies cards. Enemies are placed in the hunting ground, and during the combat phase you send an Alpha (your choice of Garou from your pack) into the hunting grounds to battle the other Alphas or any other enemies or characters that happen to be there with you. I intend to make a deck rich in Enemies, I won my first game without ever attacking my opponent!

The game is also rich in Votes and Rites with a good tribal feel to

it, however this can cause problems in a two player game, indeed **Rage** is designed as a multi-player game, though it plays much better one-on-one than does *Jyhad*.

Overall I rate **Rage** very highly and I recommend it to everyone.

ICE AGE

Magic the Gathering supplement
Published by Wizards of the Coast
Reviewed by T.S. O'Carroll

Available in 60-card starter decks and 15-card booster packs. The world of Dominaria, the setting of *Magic: The Gathering*, is in the frozen grip of an ice age. These survivors of the Antiquities War have more to contend with than just snow and freezing wind,

however: they must fight against the undead legions of Lim-Dul and Leshrac, who want to destroy all life on Dominaria...

This is the basic background to **Ice Age**, the first “stand alone expansion” to Magic: The Gathering. Just what is a stand-alone expansion, anyway? Well, unlike other expansions to Magic, you don’t need cards from the basic set to play. In fact, **Ice Age** is an alternative to the basic set of cards itself. Some of the spells in **Ice Age** are the same as in The Gathering, around 8%, another 8% are “tweaks” of Gathering cards-slightly modified. The rest of the cards are all new, and all cards have new artwork.

The new artwork on the cards is absolutely gorgeous-the overall level of artwork is superior by far to the original set. As WOTC releases each new set for magic, the standard just seems to get better. Some of it I really don’t like, but all of the art I don’t like is by the same few artists, so perhaps that’s a matter of taste.

If this were simply a redoing or revision of the original basic set, it would get a big yawn from Magic mavens like myself. **Ice Age**, however, is superior in a number of ways. Firstly, there is a lot more background cohesiveness than in the Gathering. On several cards, for example, there are quotations from General Jarkeld, “the Arctic Fox.” There is also a General Jarkeld card- players can summon him to fight for them! The great flavour text on the cards really draws the players into the Ice Age world.

Secondly, **Ice Age** is much more balanced than The Gathering. This set has been very extensively play tested and it shows - most rare cards are not really much more powerful than the common cards, they just have unusual or specialised effects.

Thirdly, **Ice Age** innovates. There is much more co-operation between “friendly” colours of magic. Look at the back of a Magic card - the colours are arranged at the points of a pentagon. The two opposite colours are enemy colours, the two adjacent colours to any colours are friends. For example, Black is the enemy of Green and White but friendly to Red and Blue. There are plenty of cards which punish the opponent for using an enemy colour of magic in the Gathering, but none which help “friends” cooperate. There are quite a number of these in **Ice Age**. Also there are cards which have “draw one card” as an extra effect, so that in effect these cards don’t cost a card to cast. Since players only draw one card per turn normally, cards are always in short supply. There are also “Legends” (a special type of creature card) and “multi-coloured” spells (spells that take more than one colour of mana to cast.)

Ice Age is a terrific new world for Magic players to explore. You can play it by itself, or mix it with your Gathering cards and supplements. Either way, it's worth buying a starter or two.

MAGIC:THE GATHERING 4TH EDITION

Collectible Card Game
Published by Wizards of the Coast
Reviewed by Chris Johnson

The latest M:TG release (at least at the time of writing) is the re-revised set, or **4th Edition**. WotC's regular (re)cycling of cards from expansion sets into the basic set. This provides the recent Magic victim with a way to get

some of those cards that the old timers have. Following is a list of the cards cycled into 4th Ed. from various Magic expansion sets:

Abomination	Coral Helm	Immolation	Sindbad	White Mana Battery	Flood
Alabaster Potion	Cosmic Horror	Junun Efreet	Spirit Link	Winds of Change	Ghost Ship
Ali Baba	Crimson Manticore	Kismet	Spirit Shackle	Winter Blast	Goblin Rock Sled
Amrou Kithkin	Cursed Rack	Lost Soul	Strip Mine	Xenic Poltergeist	Inferno
Amulet of Kroog	Cyclopean Mummy	Mishra's Factory	Sylvan Library	Yotian Soldier	Leviathan
Ashnod's Battle	Detonate	Nafs Asp	Tawnos's Wand	Zephyr Falcon	Mana Clash
Gear	Divine	Oasis	Tawnos's Weaponry		Marsh Gas
Backfire	Transformation	Osai Vultures	Tempest Efreet	And from The Dark...	Marsh Viper
Battering Ram	Durkwood Boars	Piety	Tetravus		Mind Bomb
Bird Maiden	Elder Land Wurm	Pit Scorpion	The Brute	Angry Mob	Morale
Black Mana Battery	Elven Riders	Pradesh Gypsies	Time Elemental	Apprentice Wizard	Murk Dwellers
Blight	Energy Tap	Psionic Entity	Triskelion	Ashes to Ashes	Pikemen
Blood Lust	Eternal Warrior	Pyrotechnics	Tundra Wolves	Ball Lightning	Rag Man
Blue Mana Battery	Fortified Area	Radjan Spirit	Twiddle	Bog Imp	Sisters of the Flame
Brainwash	Gaseous Form	Rebirth	Untamed Wilds	Brothers of Fire	Sunken City
Bronze Tablet	Giant Strength	Red Mana Battery	Urza's Avenger	Carnivorous Plant	Uncle Istvan
Carrion Ants	Giant Tortoise	Relic Bind	Vampire Bats	Cave People	Venom
Clay Statue	Grapeshot Catapult	Sandstorm	Visions	Diabolic Machine	Word of Binding
Clockwork Avian	Greed	Seeker	Wall of Dust	Erosion	
Colossus of Sardia	Green Mana Battery	Segovian Leviathan	Wall of Spears	Fellwar Stone	
CoP: Artifacts	Hurr Jackal	Shapeshifter	Whirling Dervish	Fissure	

I generally like this revision, I came into Magic *just* after Legends sold out, and although at one stage I had many Legends commons and a few uncommons, I never had more than three rares at any one time. The same goes for Antiquities, and Arabian Nights, well forget it, I managed four commons. So I was quite looking forward to the "new" cards in **MTG 4th Edition**, whatever they were going to be. I have a list of cards below that I believe stand out, for whatever reason, from the new inclusions:

Carrion Ants [Ha!] I never got one of these, they're great in multicoloured decks and it's one in the eye for those players that liked to rain on your picnic with the Ants.

CoP: Artifacts [Ha!] Was over priced, but quite useful card.

Cursed Rack [No...] Did WotC have to *add* another rack to Magic, two are bad enough.

Divine Transformation [Yes!] Oh, the art. All praise NÈNÈ.

Elder Land Wurm [Yes!] Another great piece of art, and another boon for white.

Greed [YES!] This is my favourite in 4th Ed. It goes straight into my "I want MORE cards" deck.

Kismet [Yes!] Cool card, great art, brings down an overpriced card.

Psionic Entity [Kewel] A Funky card I've always wanted to play. Just put a Blue Ward on it...

Segovian Leviathan [Kewel] Straight into the landwalk deck (but why is it dwarfing those whales if it's only 3/3)

Spirit Link [Ha!] Another one in the eye for those that kept flaunting their Spirit Links, also brings the value of the card back down to earth

(\$45 indeed)

Strip Mine [Ha!] I could've done without this card, but I will include it as standard, if only to combat a Maze of Ith.

Sylvan Library [Hmmm] Now I've played with it a bit it's a cool card and is worth highlighting.

Tetravus [Kewel] I've always wanted one of these...

Time Elemental [Ha!] Not a hugely useful card, but highly valued.

Twiddle [Kewel] This proved wrong all those who believed WotC wouldn't bring back anything from previous basic sets.

Visions [Yes!] Artwork!

Wall of Spears [Kewel] My fave wall, the only first-striking wall.

Yotian Soldier [Groan] We're already up to the eyeballs in these!

Angry Mob [Kewel] Artwork, and a cool white card.

Inferno [Kewel] I can't believe it's an instant.

Sunken City [Groan] I believe this is the worst inclusion, it is too good and weights Blue too strongly.

As for the Fork, it was Red's *only* copy card, *Demonic Tutor* was a cool Black card, but hardly worth removing. *Regrowth*; again, a cool card, it suited Green very well, I don't see why it had to be removed. *Reconstruction*; with the removal of this and *Regrowth* there is now no way to get artifacts back from the graveyard in the basic set. WotC made a lot of noise about closing the gap between old and new players before **4th Edition**. But I believe that the removal of these cards will widen the gap, not close it.

Flying in the face of the more vocal, opinionated Magic players I would have to say I like this revision, but I probably had made my mind up before it had even arrived, much like those that hate it. On the technical aspects, no land in the boosters is very nice and the new, higher printing density is very welcome; the art excellent WotC just shines now.

All in all, I heartily recommend this to all Magic players.

And that's all from Card Magic this issue. We've got heaps more to check out next issue. Look for more free card giveaways coming soon: INWO Assassins expansion cards and an exclusive card from the upcoming Warlords CCG. from SSG. See ya there!

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