THE GREAT MACHINE

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THIRDSPACE

Many Welcomings!

Oh hello, it is Zathras here. Zathras very busy, but he gives you this data file. File contains much info about ancients, and other old beings. File is a comparison of ancients, but there are other ancients too. Old and evil beings from Thirdspace. Zathras' great, great, great grandfather told Vorlons that gate bad idea, but Vorlons never listened to Zathras. Vorlons didn't listen, and now Draal doesn't listen to Zathras. We Zathras talk much but others listen little. Zathras knows not all Thirdspace evil, there is also Tapla and the Few who endure. Arrival of gate here is very bad news. Gate can cause great war, aliens have much telepathy to prey on minds of weak. Zathras fears not, Zathras has strong mind.

<ZOINK>

Zathras must go . . . Zathras must force Draal to direct high energy . . . low intensity . . . beam on alien gate . . . attack only way . . . to replenish . . . er . . . circumvent defences. Yes, Zathras . . . must tell Draal . . . or Zathras must do himself.

<<ZATHRAS!! WHERE IS HE?>>

Oh, Draal is calling Zathras. Zathras has much work to do, no time for strange dreams. Zathras heard someone talking to him, but is must have been dirt. Not even dirt listen to Zathras.

ZATHRAS,
CARETAKER

Contents

THIRDSPACE

"Our great mistake, our failing and now your failing. The error is compounded."

"What mistake?"

"The first one. The one from which all mistakes precede: the error of pride. We had traveled to a thousand worlds. We brought order, discipline. We appeared to them as being of light. They saw us as emissaries of the universe. They saw us as gods. And we, in our pride, began to believe them. We believed that we were superior to the universe that gave us birth, We believed that we could transcend this dimension, that we believed that we belonged to another higher plain. And in the end, in terms you can understand, we resolved to storm the gates of heaven it's self. We applied all our wisdom, all our knowledge, to opening a door to another dimension. A place, we believed was the well of souls, the foundation for all life. We would touch the face of God and in so doing become gods ourselves. We forgot that a door may swing in two direction. We were so concerned with getting out, that we never stopped to consider what we might be letting in, until it was too late.

They are a power beyond comprehension, a hunger beyond understanding. They are anti-life itself. Older even than we were. Telepathic, all of them. They modified the gate so that it enhances their telepathic impulses...created an army of our own people willing to die for them. We fought them back, disabled the device, but...those of us who were controlled by their influence dropped it into hyperspace before we could stop them. Hid it from us."

"What do they want?

"To destroy all life that is not their own. They believe only they have the right to exist in the universe, that all other lifeforms are inferior and must be exterminated. In their own universe they have destroyed thousands of races, and continue to destroy thousands more. Because of our pride, they know we are here. They watch us from within their dark cities, waiting for a chance to come here...and destroy."

- Lyta Alexander, Delenn and John Sheridan

Thirdspace

Introduction

It was the middle of the Earth year 2261. The year between wars and the beginning of a new age. The Shadow War is over, but there was still a darkness waiting for us at home. President Santiago had been assassinated, and his successor President Clark was turning Earth into a prison camp. We'd broken away from Earth, and in retaliation, they quarantined us, trying to strangle our supply lines. We were desperate, and we couldn't afford to lose even a single supply ship. In the midst of all of this, we made contact with thirdspace, and we almost didn't survive it. I only hope we never come across it again because next time, no one's going to survive it.

Welcome to the Thirdspace issue of The Great Machine! This issue has taken a lot of hours to compile, and we couldn't have done it without the help of all of those Babylon 5 Wars fans that took the time to ready submissions.

In this issue we are going to make an attempt to better understand the Thirdspace Aliens, both in regards to their ships and technology as well as their ideology. By JMS' own admission on the recent movie DVD's, the Thirdspace Aliens draw in large part from the well-known Lovecraftian mythos. Foreboding and truly alien, the Thirdspace Aliens represent one of the most fearsome threats the Babylon 5 universe has ever known.

The Movie

Thirdspace was the second Babylon 5 movie ordered by TNT. It also have the distinction of being the last appearance of Claudia Christian as Command Susan Ivanova before contract disputes (or other causes,

depending who is asked) terminated her relationship with Babylon 5 (*Sleeping in Light* was filmed before *Thirdspace*).

Of the Babylon 5 telefilms, Thirdspace is one that elicits a love/hate response from most fans. Overall, *Thirdspace* is not seen as the worst of the telefilms, but its disconnect from the rest of the series has left many fans considering it only semi-canon (if that). To them, the fact that the discovery of the *Thirdspace* artifact was never discussed anywhere else in the series makes it nothing more than a flight of fancy that can be safely ignored. That Thirdspace and the artifact were not discussed during the fourth season, during which Thirdspace takes place, does makes sense since the movie was not produced until after the fourth season was already complete.

Of course, *Thirdspace* was not meant to be an arc-sensitive outing in the Babylon 5 universe. To the contrary, JMS himself has stated on several occasions that Thirdspace was more a vehicle to explore a different type of storytelling. TNT was willing to pony up for another Babylon 5 telefilm and he saw it as a perfect opportunity to tell a type of story that he wanted to tell, while letting someone else foot the bill.
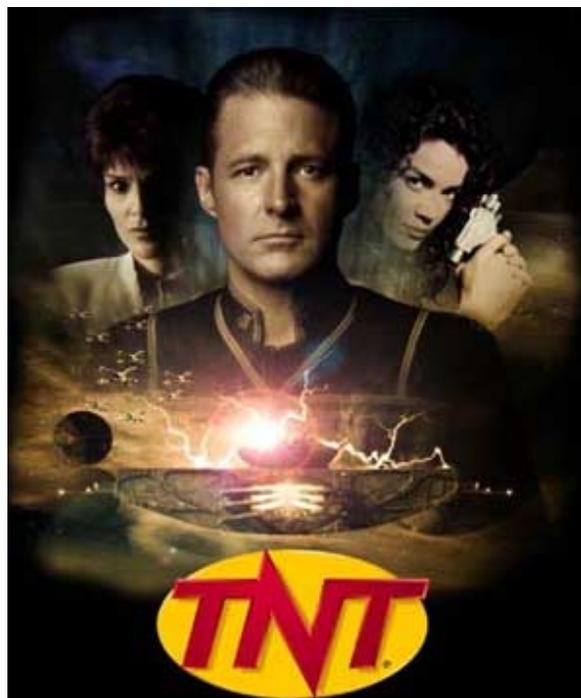
Another reason for viewer disappointment with *Thirdspace* could be that the first Babylon 5 telefilm, *In the Beginning*, was tied to the arc and helped to fill in the gaps and detail one of the more important historical periods of the Babylon 5 universe: the Earth/Minbari War. If fans were expecting a second In the Beginning when they sat down for Thirdspace, it may have soured their opinions.

Despite this, *Thirdspace* is still a fun romp in the Babylon 5 universe and does help to explore some interesting facets of the Vorlon story threads. It also leaves the possibility for future Vorlon "mistakes" to eventually make themselves apparent.

History of Thirdspace

The door to Thirdspace has been opened only twice in the history of the Babylon 5 universe that we know of, and each time the opening of that door brought with it dire consequences for those foolish enough to recklessly peer into the unknown. For, those that dare to stare into the abyss rarely consider

that the abyss may be staring back at them.

We know very little of the history or nature of Thirdspace. The only knowledge we have of Thirdspace comes from Babylon 5's direct encounter with them; and the Vorlon's genetic warning. Both encounters do however paint a very broad picture of the dire conditions in Thirdspace.

The view from the Thirdspace Alien planet seen in Ivanova's dream is that of awesome beauty, yet overwhelmed by chilling darkness. The entire dimension seems engulfed in purple, nebulous cloud formations, not dissimilar from those found in hyperspace. The planet's sun was still visible, as were some stars, but largely the features of the night's sky were obscured by the native phenomena.

It could be said that these were simply atmospheric features, not innate properties of Thirdspace. This could be argued, if not for the view of the Thirdspace Alien fleet on their side of the gate. The fleet sat quietly, waiting for their chance to emerge into our dimension, within a similar purplish quagmire. It can be assumed, then, that all of Thirdspace is filled with these purple cloud formations.

The Thirdspace Aliens were older and more powerful than even the Vorlons upon the opening of the first doorway between our dimension and Thirdspace. This would have been during the Primordial era of the Ancients when all of them were at their heights of power. The fact that the Thirdspace Aliens proved a challenge for the Vorlon Empire at this point in time is very telling of the power wielded by the Thirdspace Aliens.

In the time since the door was closed and the artifact damaged, the Thirdspace Aliens continued their campaign of destruction across their home galaxy. It cannot even be imagined how many alien species have been incinerated by the Thirdspace Aliens to this point.

Thirdspace Alien Physiology

The physical appearance of the Thirdspace Aliens seen within the core of the artifact was similar to that of a large, deformed crab. It is debatable whether or not this was the true form of the Thirdspace Aliens, an encounter suit like those used by the Vorlons, or some sort of specialized EVA unit. However, the fact that the entity's snapping jaws would seem to indicate that it was, in fact, the true form of the Thirdspace Aliens. After all, who would build an encounter or EVA suit with sharp teeth and snapping jaws? It is doubtful that they would serve any legitimate function that would necessitate their inclusion.

The theory that the large, bulky form is their true appearance is reinforced by the shadow cast on a wall in Lyta's initial dream sequence. The silhouette of a creature of the same shape as the alien's can be seen on the wall towards the end of Lyta's vision.

Thirdspace Alien Crews & Population

There is not enough information to know whether or not Thirdspace Alien ships are crewed by members of their own race or are, instead, fully automated. We can be certain that these units are not piloted by servant races, as is the case with the Vorlon and Shadow fleets. The Thirdspace Aliens' complete and utter contempt for other sentient life would preclude the use of other alien species as underlings.

Depending on your interpretation, the Thirdspace Aliens might be much more numerous than other Ancient species. The fact that the Thirdspace Aliens have spread throughout their galaxy, annihilating life as they go, would seem a fairly good indication that there are enough of their species extent to support long-term genocidal operations.

Thirdspace Technology

During the course of the movie, we are introduced to several elements of Thirdspace Alien technology. Their ships share the organic aesthetic common among Ancients. However, the Thirdspace Aliens' ships and fighters tended to be asymmetrical and shaped like old, gnarled tree branches. This seems to act as a visual reinforcement of the statement by Lyta that the Thirdspace Aliens are "anti-life itself."

The weapons used by the Thirdspace Aliens are described under each unit's section. One piece of technological capable that was quite surprising and fairly unique so far in Babylon 5 was the ability to "materialize" devices for quick, ready use. During Sheridan's retreat from the Gate's core, the Thirdspace Aliens materialized a claw-like projectile out of nowhere. Once fully materialized, the claw threw itself towards Sheridan's position, coming

close to killing poor Johnny "Nuke 'em" Sheridan. Of the Vorlons and Shadow, neither has demonstrated the capability to materialize devices at will. Some of their ships can form implements from the hull itself as needed (such as the stun beam that Kosh's transport used in one episode), but spontaneous appearance is fairly unique.

Thirdspace Units

Thirdspace Fighter

The Thirdspace Alien ship that we are most familiar with is their smaller unit, commonly called a "fighter." After review of the Thirdspace effects, it becomes clear that there are some things that we can say without a doubt about the fighters, and yet several inconsistencies in the CGI which must be addressed.

Now, for the things we know. The fighters were the first ships dispatched by the Thirdspace aliens after the activation of the gate. Four or five of the fighters emerged from the portal to begin with, likely as a probing or scouting action. Afterwards, an entire wave of these fighters joined the fray.

In combat, these fighters fired red bolts at their targets. These appeared as bursts of fire, complete with flaming tails. This would seem to indicate that the weapons were some sort of plasma weapon, though this is inconclusive. Upon impact, these bolts seemed to expand and dissipate much like Flash mode weapons are supposed to function within the Babylon 5 Wars rules. Against smaller targets, however, this explosive impact did not exist. Instead, the weapons simply blew through the targets like any commonly seen B5 weapons effect.

For defense, the Thirdspace fighters exhibited some sort of energy shield unlike any before witnessed in the Babylon 5 universe. The Vorlon ships were seen to use some form of shielding, but it did not have the aesthetic qualities of the Thirdspace shielding and should probably be considered a much different beast. This shielding was extremely effective in combat. A Starfury pilot remarked during the climactic battle that it took four successive shots to even break through a fighter's shielding. In another scene, a White Star pours neutron laser fire into a fighter for a considerable length of time before the Thirdspace fighter eventually succumbs to the punishment.

The Thirdspace fighter's energy shielding was by far the Thirdspace Alien's greatest asset when fighting the Babylon 5 defense forces. It did not seem like the weapons on their fighters were particularly impressive,

A Thirdspace Alien fighter fires its main gun. Note the "blossom" effect of the weapons fire as it forms at the forward end of the ship.

A Starfury takes a glancing blow from one of the Thirdspace Alien fighters.

Seconds later, another Starfury takes a direct hit from the same type of enemy weapon. The Starfury is destroyed!

A Thirdspace Alien fighter takes an improved neutron laser, but its shielding holds under the onslaught.

The White Star continues pouring sustained fire into the alien craft. The enemy's shields are clearly visible, the beam acting to overwhelm its defenses. Meanwhile, the Thirdspace Alien fighter continues to fire back at the White Star.

The Thirdspace Alien fighter is finally destroyed. However, the final series of volleys fired by the craft wracks the White Star, doing severe damage. The explosive waves shown are caused by the immolative qualities of Thirdspace Alien weaponry.

A Thirdspace Alien capital ship starts to emerge from the gate just before it is destroyed. The capabilities of this type of ship are unknown, but based on its size and the combat abilities of the lesser Thirdspace Alien ships, it is a good guess that the successful deployment of one of these ships would have spelled an end to the battle and marked the beginning of the destruction of all life in our universe.

and the ships crumpled quickly after their shields collapsed.

The largest inconsistency with the Thirdspace fighter craft is their size. The first fighters to come through the gate were comparable in size to EA Starfuries, based on the scaling of their weapons' fire. Many in the second wave seemed to be of a similar size. A duel between a Starfury and Thirdspace fighter exemplifies this particular scaling. We see a Starfury pouring weapons fire into a Thirdspace fighter at close range until, finally, the Thirdspace craft lands a fatal blow to the Starfury.

Yet, elsewhere in the movie's ending combat scenes, we see combat sequences where Thirdspace fighters are pitted against White Stars, in particular a duel similar to that noted before, just involving a White Star instead of a Starfury. In these effects shots, the Thirdspace fighter seems to be roughly the size of the forward, nose section of the White Star, if not a little larger.

So which size is correct? It is really anyone's guess. It is possible that two different sizes of Thirdspace fighters exist. The more accurate survey of the screen evidence is that it was an unintentionally mistake by the CGI artists who were scrambling to get the effects work done as time and budget allowed. Remember that *Thirdspace* was produced while Netter Digital was still somewhat "rough around the edges." In any event, this is something that will come down to personal opinions and can not be judged objectively.

Thirdspace Capital Ship

Large and very impressive, the greatest tragedy of Thirdspace from an effects-oriented fan's perspective is never getting to see the Thirdspace capital ship fire. This large vessel is twisted and intertwined like the rest of the Thirdspace Alien's constructs, but the addition of a glowing ball of energy at the heart of the ship makes for an intriguing sight. Three forward pylons extend from the bow of the ship, presumably weapon systems.

It is not known what type of weapons or defenses the capital ships were equipped with, though it is quite likely that they had similar or related equipment. Perhaps it is better for the Babylon 5 universe that we never found out the true defensive and offensive capabilities of these warships.

New Rules

Thirdspace Telepathy

The Thirdspace Aliens are all telepathic, and have telepathic capabilities beyond those demonstrated by most other alien species to date, including some of the Ancients. The Vorlons themselves feared the Thirdspace Alien's telepathy, and for good reason. The Thirdspace Aliens were successfully in taking control of the minds of even the Vorlon's mental adepts.

Each Thirdspace ship larger than a Medium Ship in classification is considered to carry one P-18 telepath as standard equipment. This telepath can be used accordingly to the previously printed B5W telepath rules, but can also perform a special mission to disrupt operations on a target vessel.

Intense Telepathic Attacks

Each turn, a Thirdspace telepath can elect to perform Intense Telepathic Attacks. These attacks are directed at a single enemy flight, ship, or base. The target of the telepathic attacks must be crewed in some manner. Attacks on unmanned outposts or automated defenses will by their very definition fail.

If a unit is attacked in this manner, roll on the following chart to determine results. Unless otherwise noted all effects are cumulative and will continue to affect the unit until the scenario is ended.

Intense Telepathic Attacks Chart (d20)

1-8:   Crew: Marine contingent formed under the Thirdspace Alien's control; roll randomly to determine in which ship section the marine contingent is formed. Marines do not roll for insertion, but suffer a +2 penalty to all mission result rolls.

9-10:   Hangar: Cannot launch/land fighters or shuttles on the next combat turn.

11-12: Engine: -1 thrust for the rest of the scenario.

13-14: Reactor: -1 power for the rest of the scenario.

15-16: Sensors: -1 EW for the rest of the scenario; cannot change EW on next turn.

17-18: Fire Control: -1 fire control penalty for the rest of the scenario.

19-20: Initiative: -2 initiative for the rest of the scenario.

Effect of Thirdspace Gate on Intense Telepathic Attacks

If a scenario takes place at the same location as the Thirdspace Gate, all Thirdspace Alien telepaths can make two Intense Telepathic Attacks per turn instead of only one as normal. The gate acts to amplify the Thirdspace Alien's natural telepathic abilities, allowing them greater accuracy and success in attempting to seduce the minds of aliens awaiting their arrival on the other side.

Additionally, all Thirdspace Alien ships waiting on the other side of the Thirdspace Gate, and are in the same hex as the gate, can make one Intense Telepathic Attack per combat turn. Their proximity to the gate and its amplification functions allow them to pierce the veil of Thirdspace, breaking through to interact with minds on the other side of the gate. This is how the Thirdspace Aliens were able to contact the residents on Babylon 5 prior to their arrival in our dimension.

Closing Thought

Even at their height, the Vorlon Empire had difficulty containing and repelling the Thirdspace Alien invasion of our dimension. What would have happened had the Army of Light not managed to destroy the Thirdspace Gate? What if the invasion had continued? Now that the Vorlons, Shadows and the rest of the First Ones were gone, would a coalition of younger powers been capable of containing – not to mention defeating – the Thirdspace Aliens once a foothold was established in the Epsilon Eridani system?

* * *

The Thirdspace Aliens

The Door is Opening: Thirdspace Aliens
By Tyrel Lohr

Introduction

Thirdspace is probably my second favorite Babylon 5 telefilm, behind *In the Beginning*. Sure, the continuity problem chafes on me, but it does make for a fun story, especially where it involves the Vorlons. The existence of an alien force more powerful than even the Vorlons is enough to send shivers down your spine without learning that they have a predilection towards galactic extermination.

In preparing my Thirdspace Alien conversions, I have tried my best to keep the units on par with the other Ancients, with the Thirdspacers having an advantage in certain areas. The Thirdspace Aliens' civilization is older than that of the Vorlons, putting them on par with the Shadows most likely in age.

My initial approach to these conversions was quite different from the final result. After thinking about how the rules would work together, and after having several conversations with Jörg on the subject, I decided that something in between the two might work best.

The ships rely on plasma weapons, as that is my interpretation of what we saw on the screen. I did not have the weapons lose damage over range like normal plasma weaponry, in large part because the weapons seemed to lose very little damage (if any) over range. There was little noticeable dissipation, just large blobs of plasma flying through space until they splashed against the ship hull. Because of this splash effect, I also decided that the fighter's main weapon should probably do damage in a modified Flash mode.

The ships also use a modified version of the Ipsha Singularity Drive System. I have never liked the way that the Ipsha were presented (playtest or post-playtest), but tried to shoehorn the Singularity Drive System rules that I prefer in there the best I could.

Special Rules & Technologies

Advanced Singularity Drive System

Thirdspace Alien ships use a central singularity core to power and propel their ships. Ships equipped with Advanced Singularity Drives have a single mag-gravitic reactor that provides for all of the unit's power and thrust needs. Mag-gravitic reactors replace both engines and reactors on ships with Advanced Singularity Drive Systems. The number contained in the reactor icon is the amount of thrust produced each turn. Ships with Advanced Singularity Drives do NOT have thrusters. They can thrust in any direction, using up to their maximum available free thrust to maneuver. As a result, ships with Advanced Singularity Drive Systems can never suffer from thruster criticals, as they don't have thrusters.

When rolling for critical hits, Advanced Singularity Drive Systems roll for both a normal mag-gravitic reactor critical and an engine critical whenever the mag-gravitic reactor is damaged.

Energy Shield

The Energy Shields used by the Thirdspace Aliens project a spherical defense field around a unit, protecting it from harm. Thirdspace Alien ships can be equipped with one or more Energy Shields, each capable of absorbing damage from fire through the arc indicated next to the shield box (see diagram).

Thirdspace Alien Energy Shields function much like a hybrid of the Mindrider Thought Shields and the Shadow Energy Diffusers. The Energy Shields themselves are displayed as Thought Shield-like boxes. Unlike Thought Shields, each Energy Shield is assigned a coverage arc and armor rating. The coverage arc shows from what angles incoming fire can be scored on a particular shield. All damage absorbed by an in-arc Energy Shield is first reduced by the shield's armor

rating. For example, an Energy Shield with a 5-point armor rating that is struck by a 10 point volley would first subtract the 5 point armor rating before the damage is absorbed by the shield.

Additionally, the damage absorbed by an Energy Shield does not dissipate at the end of the turn as occurs with Thought Shields, nor is there a central diffuser unit as is the case with Energy Diffusers. The only way to regenerate "used" shield capacity is through the application of power during the Power Segment. Each point of power applied to an Energy Shield will dissipate 2 points of stored energy. *Example: A 60-point Energy Shield has absorbed 44 points of damage. The ship applies 12 power to replenish the shielding. This restores 24 points of capacity to the shielding, leaving only 20 points of damage left stored in the Energy Shield. This leaves a total of 40 damage capacity still available to be filled on the current turn.*

As with Mindrider shielding, Energy Shields use a central controller unit to project the shield. If this shield unit is destroyed, all Energy Shields will collapse at the end of the turn and the shields will no longer function.

Energy Shields and Fighters

Some Thirdspace Alien fighters are equipped with Energy Shields. In this case, they operate largely in the same as those on the larger ships. However, in order to recharge their shields, the fighter must redirect power into its shielding from its main guns. Each turn, the fighter can elect to shutdown one or more of its guns, with each deactivated weapon increasing the fighter's shielding by 25% of its maximum capacity.

Plasma Incinerators

The heavy weapons used by the Thirdspace Aliens are called Plasma Incinerators. These weapons are similar in form to the advanced plasma weapons used by the Triad, though they lack the versatility enjoyed by the Triad Triumviron. Plasma Incinerators are Plasma class weapons that score damage in Raking mode. They do not lose damage over range, a characteristic common among Thirdspace Alien plasma weaponry. This is a weighty advantage when dealing with long-range fire from Vorlon heavy cruisers or dreadnoughts.

Plasma Blast

The basic Thirdspace Alien weapon, the Plasma Blast is capable of firing a concentrated "burst" of plasma. Upon impact, these volleys spread and expand, engulfing the target in fiery, red plasma. Plasma Blasts score damage in Flash mode, but do not score any "splash" damage to other units in the same hex as the target; they only affect

the unit that was actually hit by the volley.

Like the Vorlon Discharge Gun, the Plasma Blast can have extra power channeled into it in order to achieve greater damage. Each Plasma Blast can have up to triple the normal power channeled into it, increasing the weapon's damage considerably.

Thirdspace Ships

Thirdspace Gate

This enormous jump gate device was discovered by Babylon 5 crews, floating adrift in hyperspace. The device is powered by a large internal reactor that feeds power into both the jump gate mechanism and the gate's reinforced defense screens.

In order to activate the gate, it must first be "kick started" through the application of power to a power relay on the facing side of the structure. When inactive, this device utilizes a short-range energy-draining field to absorb power from nearby units. Once the exterior capacitor is filled, it can then redirect all power into restarting the gate's own reactor.

Once activated, the Thirdspace Gate will not cease functioning for the rest of the

scenario. In fact, the doorway to Thirdspace will probably never be closed again!

It is an extremely difficult proposition to destroy the Thirdspace Gate, but the destruction of the jump drive while the gate is activate will cause a chain detonation, destroying the artifact. Captain John Sheridan used this tactic to destroy the gate.

Battlecruiser

The Battlecruiser is the primary heavy warship of the Thirdspace Alien fleet. Smaller than the heavy ships operated by other Ancients, the Battlecruiser has comparatively less mass and is more easily destroyed when its defenses are down. Fortunately for the Thirdspacers, however, the Battlecruiser is equipped with four 80-point energy shields, providing all-around defense against incoming damage. It is the defensive capabilities of the Battlecruiser which allow it to better its opponents.

It is doubtful that the Army of Light could have stopped the Thirdspace Aliens from achieving a foothold in our universe if even a single Battlecruiser had been allowed to transit the gateway between our dimensions.

Battlecarrier

A special variant of the Battlecruiser, the Battlecarrier is similar in function to the Vorlon Heavy Carrier. The Battlecarrier can transport 24 fighters into battle, though they cannot deploy very fast in tactical situations.

The Battlecarriers waiting on the other side of the Thirdspace Gate were responsible for deploying the fighters that entered normal space and engaged the Babylon 5 defense forces.

Attack Ship

The Attack Ship is a small light combat vessel designed for engaging medium size opponents. Normally outmatched by ships of this size, the Attack Ship's strong shielding allows it to weather determined assaults long enough to do severe damage to the enemy.

Unlike larger Thirdspace Alien ships, the Attack Ship does not have a jump engine of its own. The vessels were never meant to operate independently, always relying on a larger Battlecruiser to accompany it from place to place

Heavy Fighter

The Thirdspace Alien Heavy Fighter is a smaller version of the Attack Ship and is visually indistinguishable. The two craft are of wildly different sizes, however, and ships sensors will never confuse the two in battle.

Heavy Fighters are capable of swarming enemy positions, delivering salvo after salvo of light plasma blast volleys. These fighters make excellent interceptors, in large part because few alien craft can hope to break through the Heavy Fighter's formidable shielding before falling to plasma fire.

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One Mistake: Thirdspace Aliens
By Paul Brown

Introduction

Keeping in mind that I haven't seen Thirdspace since a classmate in high school taped a Space B5 Marathon on New Years '98, my interpretations tend to vary somewhat from the others. The distinguishing feature of the Thirdspace Aliens seemed to be their immense telepathic abilities. I interpreted that to be a central theme, as they took over Lyta's mind, as well as gave people some creepy nightmares.

As such, I gave them some common weaponry with the Mindriders. Essentially using the defensive gun of their ships for the small attack ships of the Thirdspace aliens.

Originally, I was going to use a variation of the Thought Shields for their vessels but found that neither the description, nor the effect was appropriate. So instead I surmised *Graviton Shields*, basically advanced Gravitic Shields that create an intense gravitational field around the vessel and disseminate and deflect any attacks as long as the field holds.

Minion Attack Ship

The Minion is the premier light attack vessel of the Thirdspace armies. Relatively expendable, the ship itself has rather weak armour and hull integrity, instead relying on Graviton Shields to remain inintact. The primary (and only weapon) is a forward mounted Trioptic Pulsar. The weapon is adequate in providing sustained, though often unreliable, amounts of damage.

What is curious is the ship's nature as a throw-away vessel. With the lower birth-rates common among Ancient-level beings, it seems unlikely that the ship would house any of the Thirdspace creatures. At the same time, as a xenocidal species, it seems unlikely that the craft would be flown by individuals from subjugated races. Analysts speculate therefore that the craft would either have pilots grown specifically for the task, or that the ships themselves may have some semblance of intelligence similar to the vessels operated by the Vorlons.

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BLEEP! BLEEP! BLEEP!

This is a test of the emergency blank space system. In the case of a deadline, the emergency blank space system will fill in empty sections of this magazine.

In the case of a real deadline, this space would be blank. It isn't. Trust us.

We return you to your e-zine, already in progress.

BLEEP! BLEEP! BLEEP!

An Echo of What Was: Thirdspace Aliens
By Jörg Kartner

Introduction

After seeing *Das Tor zur dritten Dimesnion* (the very crappy German title of *Thirdspace*). I decided to create a ship for B5wars. Thus the Battlecruiser was born.

From there I designed several other Thirdspace Alien (TSA) units! I hope you enjoy them!

New Rules

Psi Shock Emitter

The Psi shock Emitter is one of the most advanced pieces of psi-amplifying technology in the known universes. It multiplies and projects the telepathic and telekinetic power of a group of Thirspace Aliens, causing chaos everywhere around the ship that fields this rare device.

The Psi Shock Emitter affects every ship or flight within 3 hexes of the firing ship in addition to all units the firing ship has targeted. The Psi Shock Emitter rolls to hit with other movement based weapons during the applicable step of the turn sequence.

The following effects are applied to any unit that is affected by a Psi Shock Emitter. First, units up to one size category larger then the firing vessel are moved 1d6 hexes (-1 hex for Gravitic Drives) like a Minbari Gravity Net. Second, the affected units have their facing turned 60° to the left or right (e.g., one hex-side) like a Brakiri Gravitic Shifter.

The firing ship then rolls to hit against all affected units with the pulse portion of the weapon's damage. If the Psi Shock Emitter hits the target, score 1d3 pulses like a normal pulse weapon. However, each pulse scores damage like a Burst Beam, causing the normal effects even against Ancient craft. Targets without Advanced Armor also suffer an additional 1d3 Stun Beam attacks and a single Comm Disruptor Attack.

The Psi Shock Emitter is non-interceptable but is affected normally by defensive EW generated by Advanced Sensors, as well as ELINT effects generated by other Ancients.

Criticals: On a critical hit roll of 21 or more, the firing vessel will be affected by the Psi Shock Emitter every time it is fired, until the critical is repaired. Roll randomly to determine movement/facing changes.

Shield Sphere Projector

One of the greatest advantages of the TSA's ships is the advanced shield system. A Shield Sphere Projector creates a 360° defense shield capable of absorbing remarkable amounts of damage. TSA shields that have absorbed damage have their shield value lowered and require energy from the vessel's mag-gravitic reactors to be recharged. A so called Shield Efficiency shows the amount of power needed to regenerate the shielding.

Example: A Shield Efficiency of 2/1 means that 2 points of power are required to increase the shield by 1 point.

Shield Stabilizer

The Shield Stabilizer enables the TSA ships to reinforce their shields and make them less vulnerable to light weapons fire. The Shield Stabilizer adds an armor factor to the shields, which is subtracted from every volley hitting the reinforced shield. By feeding more energy in the system, the armor factor can be increased. This increased effectiveness is shown in slashed notation in the Shield Data box on the control sheet. Paying the normal power requirement for the Stabilizer gives an armor value equal to the first value, double power gives the second value, and triple power gives the third value.

Example: The Thirdspace Battlecruiser pays 8 power to engage its Shield Stabilizer. This provides a 3 armor protection bonus to the shields. If double power (16) is applied, the Battlecruiser's shield armor value would increase to 5. Finally, if triple power (24) is applied, the Battlecruiser's shield armor value would increase to 6.

Thirdspace Alien Units

Battlecruiser

The Battlecruiser is supposed to be more then a match for any cruiser fielded by the other First Ones, not to mention the cruisers fielded by the Younger Races. This mighty warship, equipped with its own quantum-singularity as a source of power and movement, bristles with weapons and is protected by its massive armored hull and extremely advanced Sphere Shield system.

Attack Ship

The Attack Ships are a design I came up with much later (and got a lot of help from others). Very maneuverable and able to cause considerable amounts of damage, these tiny vessels are also defended by a spherical shield of considerable strength.

Old Cruiser

The Old Cruiser is a relic from the time the TSA first met the Vorlons. Already able to shrug of insane amounts of damage and

equipped with fast firing batteries of plasma-based weapons, the Cruiser is a ship to fear — but without Advanced Ranged Fusers and Nucleid Burners, it is a short-range brawler.

Raiding Cruiser

The Raiding Cruiser is a new class of ship, able to mask itself, pretending to be almost any other TSA vessel. The Raiding Cruiser can use this ability to sneak close to an enemy fleet, using its powerful sensors to gather information before engaging the enemy. It can also provide fleet support for friendly ships using its Advanced ELINT Sensors. The Raiding Cruiser adds much needed flexibility to the TSA fleet and demonstrates more then any other ship that the TSA change their strategy to fit their immediate needs.

Infiltrator

The small Infiltrator is one of the few TSA ships that can be easily destroyed, an rarity among the usually rugged ships fielded by the TSA. The one virtue of these ship class is that it can cause more chaos on the battlefield than anyone could ever wish for (save for the guy playing against the Infiltrator!).

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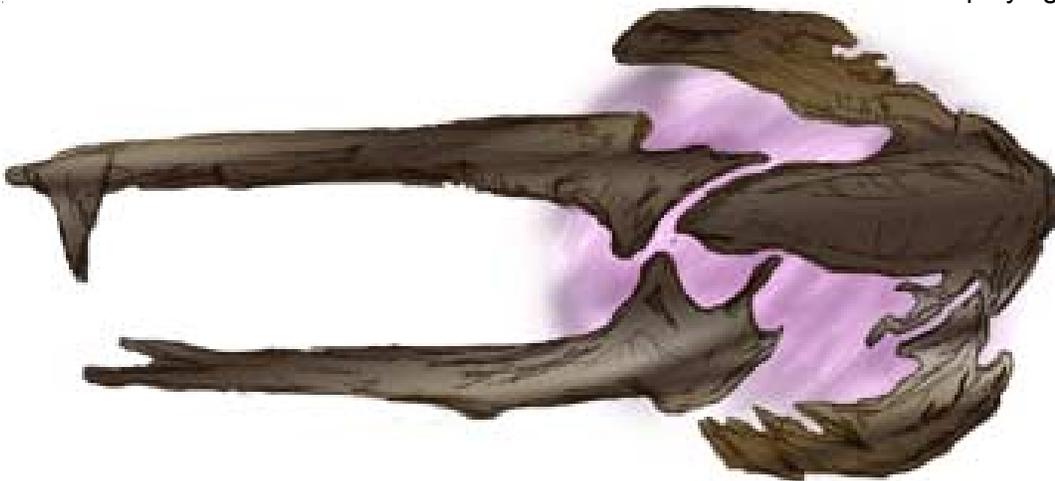
THE THIRDSPACE WAR

Thoughts on the First Thirdspace Encounter
By Stephen Radlett

The Thirdspace Device was dated at being more than one million years old, but what was the galaxy like at that time?

"We had visited thousands of worlds…we appeared as beings of light…"

From this statement we can assume that the Vorlons and Shadows had begun their manipulation of the younger races. From this we can assume the following:

- The Kirishiac War was long over
- The War Without End had begun

If this is true, then the Thirdspace Alien (TSA) incursion most likely occurred during a period of 'rest' in the cycle of the Shadow War, otherwise the Vorlons would have been too busy to 'concentrate all their power and skill' into the creation of the device. If this is the case, then what were the other First Ones doing when the TSA came marching into Normal Space? The Walkers at least would have known what could happen.

A POSSIBLE SCENARIO

During the Walkers many studies and observations, one Traveller, returning to Sigma 957 to offload it's collected data, passed through Vorlon space. Attracted by strange emanations from a Vorlon research facility, the Traveller dispatched several probes to investigate just what the Vorlons were up to.

The Walkers were surprised when the mapmakers returned images of the Vorlons constructing a new type of jump gate. A quick analysis revealed that this gate would open into dimensions other than Hyperspace. Intrigued that the primitive Vorlons might have developed a method of multi-dimensional travel (albeit, a crude one), the Walkers began an in-depth analysis of the gates abilities.

To their horror, the Walkers discovered that the Gate was attuned to only one specific permanent dimension…that which we now call Thirdspace…

The Walkers were quite familiar with Thirdspace, having successfully mapped it's entirety aeons ago. They were also quite familiar with that dimensions native inhabitants…the Thirdspace Aliens were hostile in the strongest sense, more advanced than the Walkers themselves, more numerous than the Kirishiac, more deadly than the

Shadows, telepathic, all of them at a level surpassing the Mindriders…

The Vorlons gate would swing both ways, allowing the Vorlons out of our dimension, but the TSA's would also be able to come in… Despite their mutual animosity, the Walkers decided that they had to warn the Vorlons…

The arrogant Vorlons rebuffed the Walker pleas to stop before it was too late, claiming that the Walkers simply wished to have a monopoly on Interdimensional Travel and that they couldn't bear the thought that a race as 'primitive' as the Vorlons might actually surpass them.

The Vorlons activated the gate…

And the Thirdspace Aliens, already aware that the gate had been constructed came… by the thousands…

The Vorlons were completely overwhelmed by the seemingly endless tide of TSA fighters and battleships. Though they fought valiantly, and died bravely, they could barely contain the first of many waves to come through the gate. Too

proud to ask for help, the Lords of Order would soon be swept away by the dark tide of Thirdspace.

From their experiences, the Walkers knew that the Vorlons would not be able to hold out for long against the Thirdspace invaders. They would have to aid their younger kin, but even the mighty Walkers were unable to face the Thirdspace Aliens on an even footing. The Walkers were peerless scientists, not warriors. The Kirishiac were warriors and numerous, yet their technology was antiquated even by Vorlon standards. The Triad would be helpful if they could be contacted.

In the end, the Walkers realised that there was only one race they could turn to for aide…

The Walkers went to Z'ha'dum…and the Shadows…perhaps the only race that could prove to be as vicious as the invaders…

Having only recently begun their hibernation, the Shadows were easily roused by the Walkers and the situation explained. At first, the Lords of Chaos were reluctant, the Vorlons had opposed them ever since the

forces of Order had ventured into the stars, why should Chaos now aid them? But the Shadows do not hate the Vorlons, and at that time did not want to see them destroyed. Indeed, as one Shadow put it "how can we show them that they are wrong if they are all dead?"

And so, the fleet of Primordial Shadow Vessels, stored beneath the surface of Z'ha'dum since the time of the very first cycle of the Shadow Wars, were reactivated, and the forces of chaos marshalled and prepared.

For the first time since the Kirishaic War, the Shadows and Vorlons would fight on the same side.

The Shadows and Walkers succeeded in stemming the tide of the invaders while the Vorlons managed to overpower those members of their race whom had been 'turned' by the Thirdspace Aliens and shutdown the gate.

But before the gate could be destroyed, it was cast into hyperspace. The Walkers hoped that it had been lost forever…

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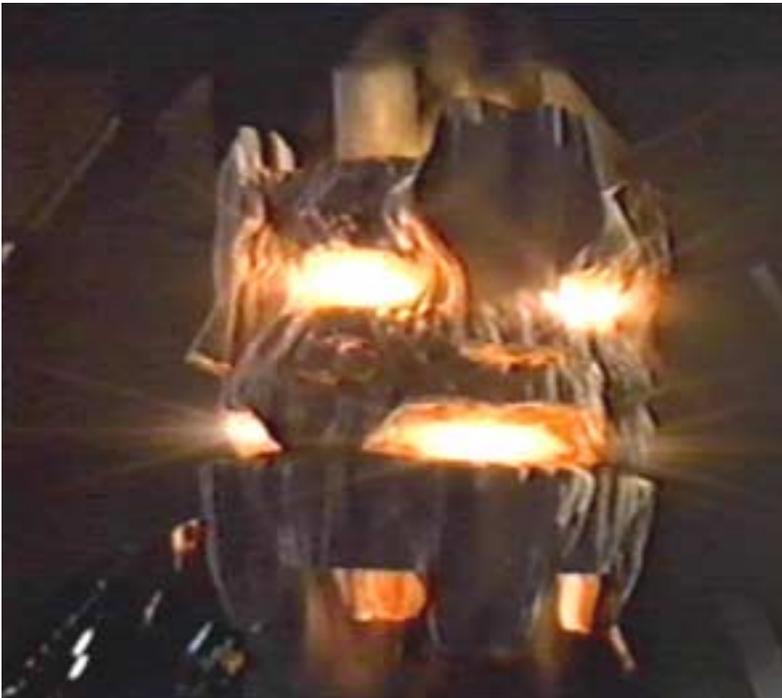
Jusy Say "ZOG!" to Thirdspace
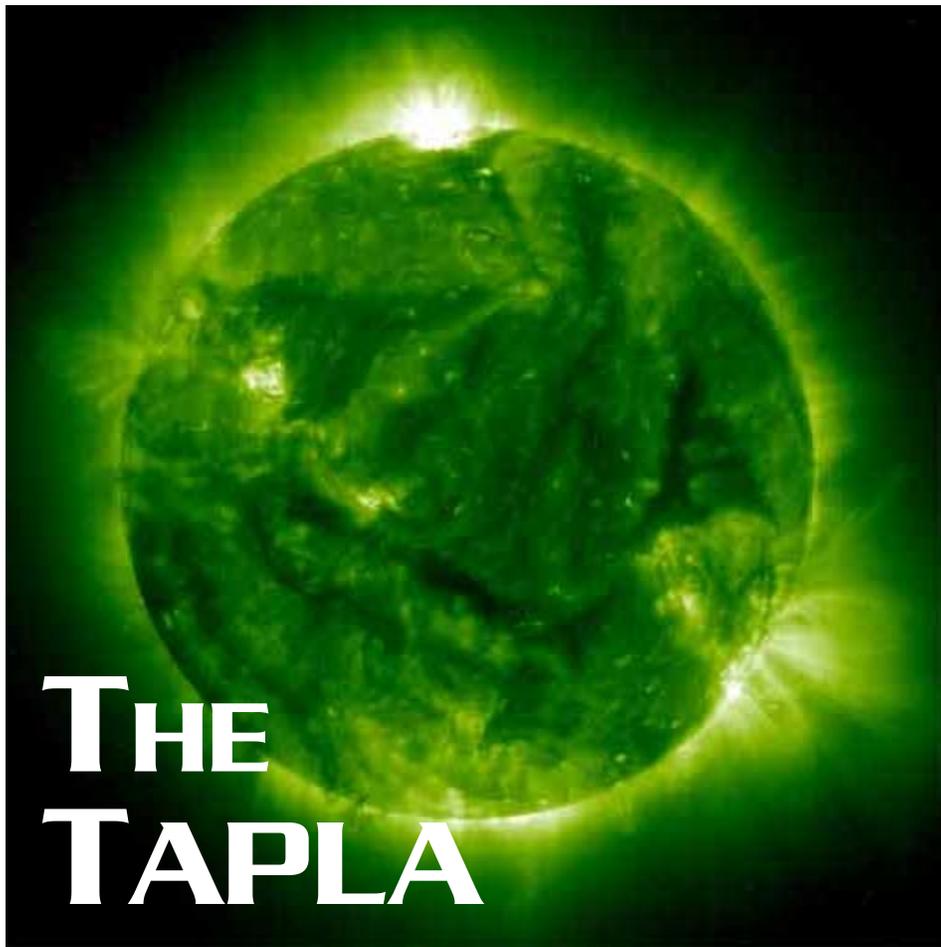
THE TAPLA

**The Living Ships
of Thirdspace**
By Sean Sturgeon

Premise

Thirdspace itself and the races within should inspire curiosity and a definite sense of "mystery" and "strangeness"… the ISA-TS Exploratory Force "Chimera" is still in the "labeling" phase of discovery and has some info and theories that are being tinkered with all of the time.

TS: Third Space
TSA: Third Space Aliens
NS: Normal Space – the B5verse

A Little Background

As noted in history the Vorlons departed (with Lorien) and left automated defenses about their systems and worlds (2260), but it was not until after the ISA had been around for ten years and "Excalibur" had found a cure for Earth's Drakh Plague (2270) that some races got seriously curious about former Vorlon space….

A Llort raiding party probing formerly-Vorlon space and scavenging Ancients' technology came across a number of teardrop-shaped, heavy-fighter-sized ships in hyperspace (came to be called "Pods") – the things scanned as being of roughly plant-mineral-based sentient critters, capable of forcing Lellats to "drop out" via PSI attack, drawn to making strafing runs through the energy flowing from ships' thrusters which resulted in power losses and had some type of shielding effective against energy-based weapons, but not against standard missiles.

The Pods entered a "Gate" (plant-mineral version of a Jump Gate which traveled along with whatever used the jump point it formed) in hyperspace that did not go to NS, disappeared and reappeared without seeming pattern and most annoyingly to the curiously inquisitive Llort – could not be utilized by their ships until the captain of an Erlorra blasted one of the Pods, stunning it (C&C critical "24+") then maneuvering into position whereupon it used its unusual cargo pod handling capabilities to latch onto the Pod. Captain Benn Skeeeeeeviii Benn would gain great prestige and also interesting things….

Captain Benn ordered his Erlorra into gate which opened into TS – the Pod it clutched enabled the ship to transit. The Erlorra was never heard from again.

An ISA patrol came across the remaining Llort force and chased it off only to discover that the "gate" had transited to near the moon of a Vorlon world – near enough to be "just within" the extreme range (120 hexes) of a Vorlon Regenerating Automated Defender (VRAD: use Vorlon Observation Post with 24 Heavy Fighters; ships getting to within 40 – 50 hexes of VRAD trigger reinforcements consisting of Triad:Archangel and 12 Cherubs arriving within 2 – 7 turns @ range 20" from VRAD; other reinforcements may appear, but nobody has <survived> to test this possibility).

Of additional interest was the fact that the gate appeared to enter

a stable phase and simply "sat" in the same position, only sometimes transiting to hyperspace – like a dolphin breaking topside for breath – before returning to the same position. The VRAD did not respond to it, nor to the Pods which came and went at will. The ISA patrol's Bluestar-classed Scout "Grey Wanderer" had a telepath aboard who made "contact" with only the second race known to exist in 3rd Space eventually called the "Tapla".

Khamdin Ogyu was a Tibetan and Buddhist. He had long thought he had forgiven the Chinese of an ever-distancing past for crimes in a world that was now radically different. Khamdin was also a P12-rated teep attached to "Grey Wanderer" and the moment he saw-sensed the pod – the size of a Frazi - pulling moves a Starfury couldn't follow in a seemingly playful fashion – the Pod made "contact" with him! A deep telepathic link Khamdin had only ever experienced with another human formed and the resultant shock was borne not from it being so different, but out of familiarity – the Tapla was experiencing other sentients just like human teeps did…then the tears began to flow as Khamdin thought of memories long-dormant and the shock deepened as he sensed that the Pod was also grieving….

The Pod experienced recent memory about the loss of a great many kin as a telepathic message from the "Reef" (vast organism-being; the source of all Tapla) was relayed that another "space-place" needed to be found and in doing so many, many would cease sharing memories. The human became somewhat more "at peace" with the past; the Pod gained a measure of serenity regarding a harsh future.

Neither aware of the contents of the other's memory. "Attunement", something the Tapla needed to thrive and grow as much as they did heat, had just entered the vocabulary of teeps from familiar space. Attunement was not some type of Shangrila-like mental state, but one containing a bit more harmony and determination- resolve to motivate the "Attuned" onwards.

The Tapla

A lifecycle consisting of two primary phases (Spore and Pod) undergone by all Tapla followed by a third phase wherein a final form (Starfish, Jellyship, Vine) is taken and completed by a fourth phase wherein a Tapla's corpse is used in the "construction" of either Gates or expansion of the Reef. The first two phases are periods of dedication to the collection of heat. Spores and Pods are undifferentiated in terms of what "Vine" they belong to – basically Spores and Pods are Tapla "children" which are raised communally and it is not until they enter their third phase that they are "claimed" by a particular "parent" (Vine). Third phase Tapla have successfully mastered "fire" (heat) and become dedicated to experience, memory and attunement. Each of the three third-phase forms is involved with attunement in differing, poorly-understood processes, and each form also fills a defined function within Tapla society.

Tapla have the following:

1) Energy Shielding: from 2 – 4pts, not effective vs standard missiles, matter weapons or gravitic weapons as far as reducing damage, but does add to defense vs these types of

attacks. Shielding emanates from and is snuggly wrapped about Tapla and thus cannot be "flown under" and avoided. If a Tapla shunts energy from all weapons to shields (goes defensive; less than half weapon systems can be destroyed when this ability is used) it adds 50% (rnd up) to the shield rating. Note that Spores do not have shields. Shields are a natural part of Tapla and have no specific target location.

2) Gravitic Drives. Equal of gravitic drives when operating in hyperspace or TS.

3) PSI ratings. All Tapla are capable of PSI attacks which cause "drop out" vs single-piloted fighters/ships and larger-sized Tapla may cause ships up to medium in size to have a penalty to their initiative and to FC ratings temporarily (as noted in descriptions of various ships).

4) Cannot be "boarded", as per Ancients' rules.

5) Immune to "drop out" effect of EM weapons and EM weapons suffer +1/3 (round up) the normal range penalties when targeting a Tapla.

6) Non-atmospheric. In fact, Tapla die if exposed to virtually any type of atmosphere.

7) No intercept weapons except vs ballistics (utilizing Spores).

8) Cannot "earn" Elite Crews or Officers. Tapla are able to create-grow variants which functionally have the same abilities so long as the points are paid for the new ship with special crew/officer(s).

9) Self Repair occurs the turn after damage was sustained and if damage that was done was energy-

based. The Shields absorb part of the incoming energy which is then utilized to repair damage (weird plant-photosynthsesis-fu). Self repair is a natural part of Tapla and thus has no specific target location.

All Tapla have telepathy and any more evolved than Spores may link with the Vine they are from as well as to Gates even between NS and hyperspace, but not between TS and NS/hyperspace. The Reef can link with any other Tapla regardless of the Vine it belongs to, but cannot do so with Tapla outside TS.

10) Tapla have crazy-good maneuver abilities as they are fully sentient "ships" – think "space dolphins' (for most of them) in terms of acrobatic antics and general temperament. Ancients use proxies for the most parts or fancy machines while the Tapla ARE their "ships" and this is a main reason for their superior maneuvering stats.

The Six Forms of the Tapla

Spore

Spores are the size of an average humanoid's fist and come in "fields" – a couple of such numbering just over 18,000 members. Spores are "provoked" by the mere presence of ships crewed by military or mostly-military personnel, while indifferent to those crewed by civilian forces. When provoked Spores tend to collect into "balls" containing anywhere up to twelve individuals and then hurl themselves at the target.

Spores exist to absorb energy and upon getting "enough" they transmongrify into a Pod, but this has not been directly witnessed

yet and communication with the Tapla has yielded that Gates are also involved in the transformation process. Spores have been present whenever a Gate has shifted from TS to NS to hyperspace. Teeps detect that they are telepathically linked to other Spores in their "field' (group), but does not operate between those in, say, hyperspace and NS as is true for more evolved Tapla.

Spores are inactive most of the time and prefer to spend it near "flares" (odd TS phenomenon consisting of explosions of plasma-like energy that happen consistently in an area of TS, but unless flaring is happening said area is indistinguishable from the rest of TS). No Spore/field has been seen to be active for longer than an hour or so and after any period of activity spores are inactive for at least a day and functionally helpless.

When Spores are active, fields somewhat analogous to those generated by active jump drives are detectable and it is believed that said field is part of the mechanism which enables such a small organism to move at starship speeds. PSI activity is also noted, but of an indeterminable nature.

Class: Iota (Greek for "itsy bitsy")

Point Value: 200 per 120; this is a min. cost even if there are less than 120.

Weapons: attacks via suicide ramming - the spores collect into "balls" containing anywhere up to twelve individuals and then hurl themselves at the target (12pts, matter damage, subtract 1pt of damage for each 2nd point of Speed faster that the target is going than the ball IF traveling away from the ball. Add 1pt of damage in the reverse case(s) – if the target has a

shield it counts as 50% higher (rnd up) in its ability to stop damage, but 50% lower (rnd up) for its defensive ability.

PSI Stun: 12 out of 120 Spores are able to PSI attack at range 0: 6- chance to hit (target gets P-rating, if applicable, subtracted from this roll), make one attack roll for each group of 6 Spores vs a flight of fighters, 1 per 2 turns, telepathically influence the pilot's reaction time (-3 from initiative for following 2 turns – not current one, target only affected by a single attack at a time). A secondary effect is that the fighter so affected separates from the flight it was with (no longer synchronized), but can still fight on its own as a "partial flight" and can recombine as noted in the RC p.136.

Spores are destroyed if hit. Ramming attacks are possible against spores, but this tends to be a rather tedious process…. proximity weapons are a *good* thing vs them. Teeps with a PSI rating of 10+ may attack all spores in a given hex (use "telepaths vs. shadows" rules except a successful "lock on" results in the spores in the target hex going inactive).

Spores attack non-civilian ships if they get to within 12 hexes. Spores will not attack civilian ships unless in defense and even then Spores suffer a -3 penalty to hit with any of their attacks including ramming (note: this does not affect ANY defensive fire used to stop an attack from hitting). Spores do not have shields.

Spore Anti-ballistics: Spores within the P-rating of nearby Tapla (a flight of Pods or more better, e.g. Starfish) AND within the Speed-range as well may be utilized by said Tapla to defend vs ballistics by literally being telepathically controlled to ram these "slow

moving" weapons. The P-rating of the controlling Tapla is the number of Spores that may be directed to defend it vs ballistic attack. Each Spore acts as a -3 intercept vs a particular ballistic and only one Spore can be directed against a particular ballistic attack. If the ballistic attack in question hits or misses by one then the Spore has actually "rammed" the attack and destroyed it before it is able to hit the Tapla.

Author's Note: A late suggestion mentioned doing this ballistic intercept as per Kor-Lyan; hey, if this makes it more playable via using established mechanisms, great!

Example: a Starfish has a P-rating of 10 and there are 5 Spores 7 hexes away from it and are moving Speed 8. A Sagittarius Missile Cruiser has launched 6 missiles at the Starfish which has a Defense of 10 – 3 (dew) – 3 (Spore intercept) = 4. The Sag gets +3 for the rack and +3 for the missile and thus needs a 10- to hit with 5 of the missiles. If "9 - 11" is rolled then that missile destroys a Spore instead of hitting the Starfish or missing. The sixth missile hits the Starfish on a 13 or less.

Pods

A pod is the size of a heavy fighter; shaped like edaname with one seed notable larger than the other and effectively flies "sideways" – long side faces fwd. Besides the PSI Stun attack it can also perform strafing runs against the flows of energy emanating from active thrusters which cause the ship in question to loose power temporarily. Pods can also perform "glancing" ramming attacks (always score "glancing" result on successful hit RC p.145 – if hit by 5 or more result

in "solid blow" result though). Pods engage in elaborate dance-like sequences at various times which have an almost hypnotic effect upon most races, but there is no understanding about why they do this or what function it serves. When asked about this, Tapla do not respond and appear to act like they never heard the question at all.

Power Drain: as noted below, extra power can be added on 1 to 1 basis to total damage done by Slight Plasma Spit attack and for using self repair ability.

PSI Stun Attack: as per Spores', 8- to hit out to range 8", no range penalties, 1 per turn. Note that if there is more than one Pod flying together, i.e. in flight formation, then add +1 to hit for each one (up to a maximum of +5 or 13-), but it is only vs a single target. So, this means that a partial or full flight of pods gets just one attack vs a single target – a single fighter or light combat vsl – NOT up to six individual attacks.

Starfish

A Starfish are the size of medium ships, shaped like *guess* (add manta-ray-like tail which is webbed at the base). Starfish are the workers and warriors of the Tapla and are responsible for "watching over" Pods. Space-born materials

(e.g. bits of asteroids) are gathered and transported to Jellyships for processing and the resulting product hence to either a Vine or Reef for utilization in the creation of more Tapla (including Gates) or for sculptures – artforms of a more mineral nature (yet some have PSI ratings) that are physical manifestations of attunements-memories deemed important by a Vine or the Reef. Minbari scientists believe the artforms to be manifestations of Tapla memes.

PSI Burst (as per electro pulse gun – affects an entire flight of fighters or 2 light combat vsls within range), 1 per 2 turns, range of 15, defender gets to add PSI rating to defense. Total the PSI rating of all defenders in a flight and then divide by 6 (or however many fighters are in the target flight), round up, to get the amount deducted from the attack – minimum of 1. So, if one pilot in a full flight was a P-12 then the entire flight gets a bonus of 2 to its defense vs this attack. If there is a single P-2 pilot then the entire flight still gets a bonus of 1 to its defense vs this attack.

Power Drain: 1 per 4 Turns; attack happens during ramming phase (attacker must fly through hex of defender on side where thruster is in active use), +3/+2/+1 + modifiers listed under "making the attempt" RC p. 144. Note: if attack gets EXACTLY number needed to hit then roll another d20 on a 17-20 actual ramming occurred and each ship takes 50% of the other's ramming factor. For every 2 full points attacker makes to hit roll by the target IMMEDIATELY looses 1pt of power. The attacker gains ½ the power drained from the defender which needs to be used by the end of the following turn. Power Drainer is located where jump engines

normally are on most SCSs for target location purposes.

Plasma "Spit" (as Plasma Accelerator): Defender gets to add 1/3rd (rnd up) of PSI rating of highest teep on ship to defense. 2 Spitters located on primary (one on each of two starfish-like appendage), each has 7 boxes.

Plasma "Spray" (as Plasma Stream): Defender gets to add bonus as with the Plasma "Spit" above. 2 Sprayers, one each on fwd and aft (where webbed tail joins between two rear appendages), each has 8 boxes.

Jellyship

The Jellyship is shaped like a jellyfish. The Jellyship travel either singularly (when detached for some type of mission with a number of lesser Tapla assistants) or in Trios (minimum guardian force for a Vine). Note: the Jellyship and anything bigger does not have Power Drain.

Miscellaneous Fun Facts

"Chimera" exploratory force is made up of ISA and some Non-ISA ships and among other things is tasked with discovering what they can about the gate from the other side – from Thirdspace.

There is a great deal of consternation (putting it mildly) about this gate and the possibility of 3rd Space Alien tourists makes it difficult even for the ISA to stop war from breaking out over this situation…thus, the reason for some non-ISA ships in Chimera. The potential scientific and technological advances are the "glue" which keeps this project viable combined with the

fact (so far) of no detectable signs of Thirdspace Aliens.

There is still a great deal of danger merely trying to get to the gate itself, which besides its moving about and proximity to regenerating automated Vorlon defenses requires that ships travel in proximity to Pods which are utilizing the gate and the ships trying it need to be 'weighted' such that there are not "too" many military crews vs non-military ones.

Tapla appear to be familiar with "younger" star types (blue, blue-white, white) and are most attracted to such. Older stars, yellow-white and reds are of little interest to them. Some Tapla (of a certain Vine's) are quite interested in a Wolf-Rayet star (big sucker, "o" classification, the outer layers of which are depleted and thus expose a pretty friggin hot core) that is near EA territory. Those Tapla interested in this star state that it is somehow linked to a still-speculative phenomenon called a "white hole" – postulated as being a point of exit from a black hole.

Planets are a form of "fatal attraction" for Tapla as most atmospheres are deadly, but many PSI sentients can be found on them.

Special thanks to and assistance from Justin the Hyach, Brigman and Demiurge + the countless players who ignored this race while in development thus indicating that it needed work – badly.

Editor's Note: The final Tapla units will be presented in a future issue.

* * *

The Enduring Few

Refugees from a True War Without End
By Paul Brown

Introduction: The Enduring Few

The motives of the creatures from Thirdspace have always been unclear, having never opened a dialogue or responded to the pleas of their victims. Their purpose however has never been in doubt, as they've rampaged across the stars extinguishing life in all forms. Though thousands of intelligent species have no doubt been eradicated by the menace, there are those who endure. Those who still weather the storm and strive to find some hope in defeating the seemingly unstoppable and unrelenting enemy.

It is unclear when the organisation came into being, but the smattering of survivors who call themselves The Enduring Few have long since abandoned any petty differences between each other. Of the races, some are undoubtedly ancient in origin, while others are those younger races who they managed to save. All races, ancient, middle-born and younger are striving under one unified cause to resist the aggression of the enemy.

The few survivors live in mobile, armoured habitats dubbed Arks. Each of these vessels surrounded by a fleet of automated warships. The Enduring Few have long since abandoned the act of facing the Thirdspace aliens directly, not so much because of the loss of life it entails, but due to the liability of facing the immense telepathic powers of the enemy. The Few live out their existence under the cover of darkness and in constant fear, continually moving to elude their pursuers while at the same time trying to strengthen their forces and the races under their banner. Their ultimate goal appears to be at best futile in undertaking, yet they will fight unto the end for to do anything less would be to embrace death itself.

New Rules

Automated Warships

The scattered habitats of the Enduring Few rely on warships controlled by complex AI to defend themselves against the enemy. These ships are advanced enough to suffer no penalties from a lack of crew. They're incredibly useful in that they are immune to the telepathic abilities of the Thirdspace aliens. Their short comings are few, consisting primarily of a higher susceptibility to the secondary effects of ancient-level EM weaponry.

Dark Matter Shields

The ships of the Enduring Few are protected by what they call Dark Matter Shields. Through advanced gravity-controlling devices and matter generators, the shield produces and manipulates a dense field of particles, gas and other substances around the ship. This has the effect of masking the vessel from enemy sensors, similar to the Torvalus Shading Field, and also

produces a nebula-like boundary around the ship. Ships firing through, into and from the shield suffer effects similar to those found within a nebula. The ships of the Enduring Few however, are essentially immune to the effects of the shield, by the shield to form a bubble around the ship or allow gaps in the field for friendly fire to pass through, even from another ship. The sensory problems of the field are largely circumvented through advanced sensors specifically suited to the task. The shield has been found to be the most effective device in combating the plasma-style weaponry of their main opponents.

Ships of the Enduring Few

Sentinel

The Sentinel is an example of a smaller automated ship in use by some of the mobile colonies. Equipped with a Dark Matter shield plus decent manoeuvrability and armour it is fairly survivable in a sustained engagement. Three Advanced Particle Blast Guns provide a decent amount of firepower that is both sustainable and highly damaging against the more fragile Thirdspace ships.

* * *

PROJECT Y:
A Voice From The Shadows

A Fly on the Wall
By Scott "Pendragon" Rose
SCS by Roman "Shadowscout" Perner

Since so many of you have been a little critical of our delay on the release of our first project…and though you have been understanding..and for the most part..patient as Real Life intruded on our lives on many occassions..we thought to provide you with a glimpse of what we have been up to.

IMPERIAL STAR LEGION

PRAETOR
Class Carrier
(RAIDER BATTLEWAGON VARIANT)

Finding themselves in need of substantial fighter support on many occasions, ISL engineers looked to create a heavy carrier design. Utilizing the hull of the workhorse Battlewagon, they swapped out some the weapons to keep them more in line with what other Legion ships were armed with. A handful of these ships were modified prior to the Interstellar Alliance reaching their base as outlined in Showdowns-3.

This is just one of our designs for the current project. There are many more…and one or two might make it past our censors to give you yet another opportunity to be the "fly on the wall."

* * *

SHIPS OF THE PRIMORDIAL SHADOW FLEET:
The Cruisers

A Look at Shadow Ship Development
By Stephen Radlett

INTRODUCTION

As Wars of the Ancients described, in Primordial times, the Shadows themselves acted as the CPU for their vessels and they did not artificially accelerate their development. The results were vessels that were far more powerful than those seen during the various Shadow Wars. While WOA provided rules to upgrade an Ancient Shadow vessel to Primordial status, these rules never truly satisfied me. A Primordial upgraded Dreadnought, while having greater firepower was still vastly inferior to a Battlecruiser in terms of survivability (Diffusers and structure). In an email I sent to Matt Plonski I queried this:

Speaking of the Shadows (my favourites!!!) I found it a little confusing that the Primordial Battle Cruiser is so much more durable/powerful than the Dreadnought (even with the Primordial Upgrade).

It was intended that there is a *real* Primordial Dreadnought that holds the place above the Primordial Battle Cruiser. I took the stance that a non-custom ship is always a better deal than one with a bunch of upgrades, but you should have the option to make the one that isn't quite worth it.

After receiving this reply I have taken it upon myself to design a fleet of Primordial Shadow vessels that I believe better represent the Fleet of the time and fall in line with the Battlecruiser in terms of progression.

In doing this I have stuck with the basic design philosophy that the Shadows seem to hold: A single weapon: the molecular slicer. I have some variants, that I feel make the Shadows even tougher, these will be looked at and rationalised in a later article.

JUSTIFACATION OF DESIGN

Wars of the Ancients tells us that Shadow Vessels grow up over time, developing over time from one class to another. It also tells us that Patrol Cruiser is the first stage of growth of the shadow Cruiser line of development. As a result I have taken the PC to be the first and most basic stage of development for a Shadow vessel and taken the progression through to the Battlecruiser, basing my ships around what I feel is a logical development.

So just what does this tell us?

The Patrol Cruiser features a single Light Molecular Slicer, 32 points of structure and two 10-point Diffuser Arrays (capable of storing 80 points of damage). It also has a 12-point Sensor Suit and 3-point Self Repair system, 5 Bio Thrusters and 9-point Initiative bonus. This is the smallest (weakest) Shadow vessel. The Battle Cruiser mounts a Heavy Molecular Slicer and two Vortex Disruptor. It's Structure is much heavier, able to take 84 points of damage and it has six Diffuser Arrays (2x5-point; 2x10-point; 2x20-point) able to store a combined total of 285 points of damage on either side. It's sensors are ranked at 14-points, it has 4 Self Repair systems (2x2-point and 2x4-point). It also has 9 thrusters; a +3 Initiative Bonus and can carry 24 fighters.

Clearly none of the 'Ancient' Shadow Cruisers fit well into this progression. Also, Wars of the Ancients tells us that the 'Destroyer' type vessels did not exist in Primordial times, so what did the Shadows use for ELINT? And so I developed the Light and Scout class

Cruisers, giving them slightly heavier structure, cutting back on the Initiative bonus and for the Light Cruiser boosting the LMS to a full Molecular Slicer. With the Scout Cruiser, the Light Slicer was retained but a 15-point ELINT Sensor Suite added. Diffuser Capacity was also increased to reflect the ship growing up. Basically, the Light Cruiser is a Patrol Cruiser with the Primordial Upgrade and the structure/diffusers tweaked to better reflect the growth of the Vessel.

For the Standard Cruiser and the Heavy Cruiser I decided to introduce the concept of Multiple Diffusers on either side in order to reflect the development through to the Battlecruiser which features 3 Diffusers on either side. The Thrusters, Fighters and Sensors of the Standard Cruiser are identical to the 'Ancient' type, while structure is slightly heavier and the Diffusers capable of storing more damage. The Heavy Cruiser is another step up and introduces the Heavy Molecular Slicer. I imagine the Heavy Cruiser to be the main workhorse of the Primordial Shadow fleet, being sent to where greater firepower was needed, yet did not justify the use of a Battlecruiser or Dreadnought. The Fighter Capacity of the Heavy Cruiser was also increased to 12 in order to reflect the progression through to the Battlecruiser which could carry 24.

Finally came the Dreadnought, which based on Matt's comment, should be more powerful than even the Battlecruiser. Again, I based the design on the 'Ancient' version of the vessel, which featured 2 Molecular Slicers. The Primordial Dreadnought should therefore mount 2 HEAVY Molecular Slicers. It's structure should also be heavier than the Battlecruisers and Diffusers and Self Repair more efficient. I also felt that the Armour should be heavier on a Dreadnought when compared to a Battlecruisers (which by definition sacrifice armour for speed) so an additional point of armour was added to all locations.
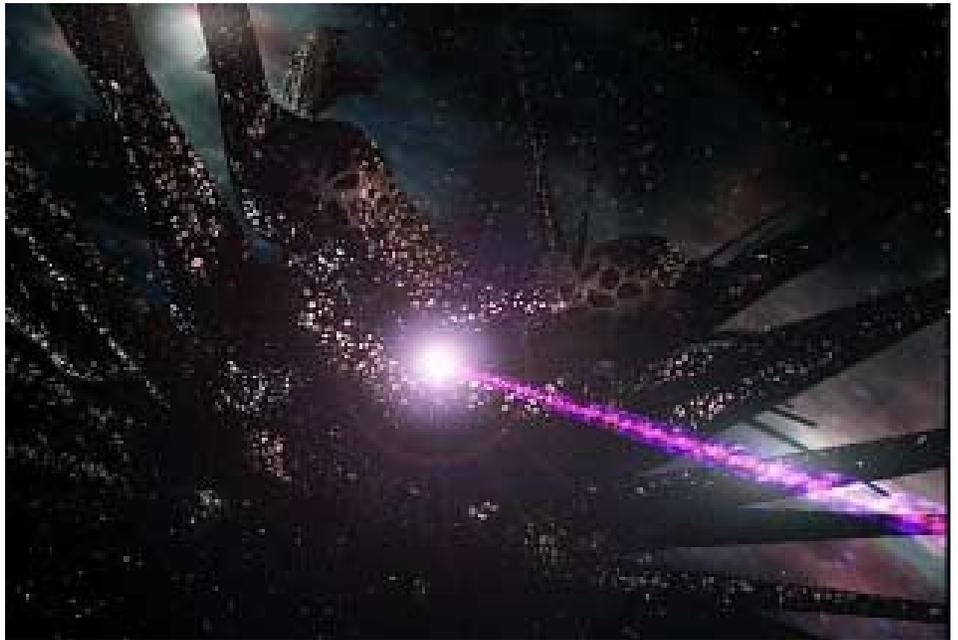
I feel that these vessels reflect a logical progression from the Patrol Cruiser onwards through to the Battlecruiser and make the Shadows a true force to be reckoned with in Primordial times.

PRIMORDIAL VESSELS & THE REASONS BEHIND ACCELERATED GROWTH

The Vorlons consider Shadow vessels, and all Shadow technology to be an abomination. This is because it is the creation of their ancient enemies who are an antithesis to themselves. It is also because the creation of any Shadow Tech requires the life of another being[1]. In recent times this has actually resulted in the deaths of many innocents. In primordial times this was not the case. The creation of a Shadow Vessel was actually linked to the Shadow that would actually serve as it's pilot, the two were bonded with the ship drawing the strength to start it's growth from the Shadow. While this would prove fatal for the Younger Races, for the Shadows, who were so long lived as to seem immortal, there were no adverse affects. In fact it resulted in a much closer bond between ship and pilot. It also implies that the Shadows can, theoretically, field a fleet as large as their entire population should the need arise (it never has).

The Primordial Shadow Vessels are many times more powerful than those faced by the younger races in the Shadow Wars. Part of the reason for the Quantity over Quality was the need to quickly rebuild the fleet during the Kirishaic War. However, the first Shadow War *did* involve a fleet that was still comprised of nearly 40% Primordial vessels. The result was a total massacre of the races encouraged to evolve. Clearly the Primordial

Shadow vessels were far to powerful for the younger races to contend with, evolution could not be served if no one survived. As an attempt to rectify the situation, the Shadows pulled their surviving Primordial vessels from the fleet and placed them in storage on Z'ha'dum for use by the Shadows themselves, should the need arise and fielded only the rapidly grown vessels, which proved difficult, but not impossible for a younger race to destroy.

Evolution was served.

SHIP PROGRESSION

Wars of the Ancients states that "Shadow vessels are living creatures bred to serve specific tasks. They normally begin their existence as a small version of whatever type of ship they are destined to be, and they grow over the course of centuries." And later it states that that Patrol Cruiser "is the first stage of growth of the standard Cruiser and the smallest vessel that a Shadow would ever travel in." So I have taken the PC to be the first stage of development for a Shadow vessel and taken the progression through to the Standard Cruiser, Battlecruiser, and finally to the TRUE Shadow Dreadnought. Against these vessels, the younger races, and even some of the First Ones do not stand a chance.

PATROL CRUISER

This vessel is exactly as described in WOA.

Initiative +9
Weapons Light Molecular Slicer
Engines 5 Bio Thrusters
Self Repair 3-point Self Repair

system (with 4 points of structure)
Sensors 12-point
Structure 32 points
Diffusers 2x10-Point Diffuser Arrays (each capable of storing 80 points of damage).

LIGHT CRUISER

The next stage of development for a Shadow Vessel, the Light Cruiser marks the first appearance of the Standard Molecular Slicer, is more durable and faster as the vessel has begun to develop. In many ways, the Light Cruiser is a match for the Standard Cruiser seen during the Shadow Wars, matching it's speed and fire power, but lacking vortex disruptors and with a slightly weaker Diffuser capacity.

Initiative +6
Weapons Molecular Slicer
Engines 6 Bio Thrusters
Self Repair 2x2-point Self Repair system (with 3 points of structure),
Sensors 12-point
Structure 40 points
Diffusers 2x15-Point Diffuser Arrays (each capable of storing 110 points of damage).

SCOUT CRUISER

A variant of the Light Cruiser and the ELINT Shadow vessel of Primordial times. The Scout Cruiser drops the Standard Molecular Slicer back down to Light variety in order to dramatically increase sensor capacity. In all other ways it is identical to the Light Cruiser.

Initiative +6
Weapons Light Molecular Slicer
Engines 6 Bio Thrusters
Self Repair 2x2-point Self Repair system (with 3 points of structure)
Sensors 15-point
Structure 40 points
Diffusers 2x15-Point Diffuser Arrays (each capable of storing 110

points of damage).

STANDARD CRUISER

The Primordial Standard Shadow Cruiser cannot be compared to the Standard Cruiser seen during the Shadow Wars, as it is far more powerful, actually falling between the Cruiser and Dreadnought of the Shadow Wars in terms of effectiveness. It also marks the first appearance of the Vortex Disruptors and MULTIPLE Diffuser arrays in each arc.

Initiative +4
Weapons Molecular Slicer; Vortex Disruptor
Fighters 6
Engines 6 Bio Thrusters
Self Repair 2x3-point Self Repair system (with 4 points of structure)
Sensors 14-point
Structure 50 points
Diffusers 2x15-Point Diffuser Arrays (each capable of storing 100 points of damage).2x10-Point Diffuser Arrays (each capable of storing 60 points of damage)

HEAVY CRUISER

The first Shadow vessel to mount a Heavy Molecular Slicer, this Primordial Shadow Cruiser is the true workhorse of the fleet and the only non limited deployment vessel to support a HMS, considered to be a match for the Dreadnought of the Shadow Wars in terms of effectiveness, it may lack the twin Molecular Slicer attack, but is capable of adsorbing and dissipating damage far more effectively.

Initiative +3
Weapons Heavy Molecular Slicer; 2xVortex Disruptor
Fighters 12
Engines 8 Bio Thrusters
Self Repair 2x4-point Self Repair system (with 6 points of structure)
Sensors 14-point

Structure   72 points
Diffusers   4x15-Point Diffuser Arrays (each capable of storing 100 points of damage)

BATTLECRUISER

Unchanged from WOA, this vessel is considered to be one of the most powerful ever developed by the Shadows. Unfortunately for the other First Ones, there was another, even larger Shadow vessel to come.

Initiative   **+3**
Weapons   Heavy Molecular Slicer; 2xVortex Disruptor
Fighters   24
Engines   9 Bio Thrusters
Self Repair   2x2-point Self Repair system (with 3 points of structure)2x4-point Self Repair system (with 6 points of structure)
Sensors   14-point
Structure   84 points
Diffusers   2x5-Point Diffuser Arrays (each capable of storing 40 points of damage).2x10-Point Diffuser Arrays (each capable of storing 105 points of damage)2x20-Point Diffuser Arrays (each capable of storing 140 points of damage)

DREADNOUGHT

The Ultimate Terror of the Shadow fleet, this massive vessel is the final stage of growth of the Shadow Cruiser (though rumours of an even larger, Command Ship have been heard) and the sight of it on approach makes even the most powerful of the First Ones reconsider action. Mounting two huge Heavy Molecular Slicers and capable of absorbing and diffusing enormous amounts of damage, these vessels often lead the Shadow Fleets into combat against the other First Ones, and were the spear head of the Shadow effort against the Kirishaic. This Shadow Dreadnought is more than a match for its Vorlon Contemporary.

Initiative   **+3**
Weapons   2xHeavy Molecular Slicer; 2xVortex Disruptor
Fighters   24
Engines   9 Bio Thrusters
Self Repair   4x4-point Self Repair system (with 6 points of structure)
Sensors   14-point
Structure   108 points
Diffusers   2x10-Point Diffuser Arrays (each capable of storing 70 points of damage).2x15-Point Diffuser Arrays (each capable of storing 120 points of damage)2x20-Point Diffuser Arrays (each capable of storing 180 points of damage)
Armour   +1 to every location

CARRIERS

In order to save space (for both the article and accompanying SCS's by Hyperion) Carriers and Shadow Fighters will be dealt with in another article.

ATTACK VESSELS

These variants were fielded by the Shadows during large-scale fleet actions, where literally hundreds of Vortex Disruptors would serve little to no purpose. Instead, Vortex Disruptors were replaced with Multi Phase Cutters and Phasing Pulse Cannons. Vessels with these armaments were denoted as ATTACK ships. Attack Cruiser, Attack Carrier, Attack Dreadnought and so on.

See Ships of the Primordial Shadow Fleet – The Kirishiac War for more details.

(Footnotes)
[1] See the Technomage Trilogy

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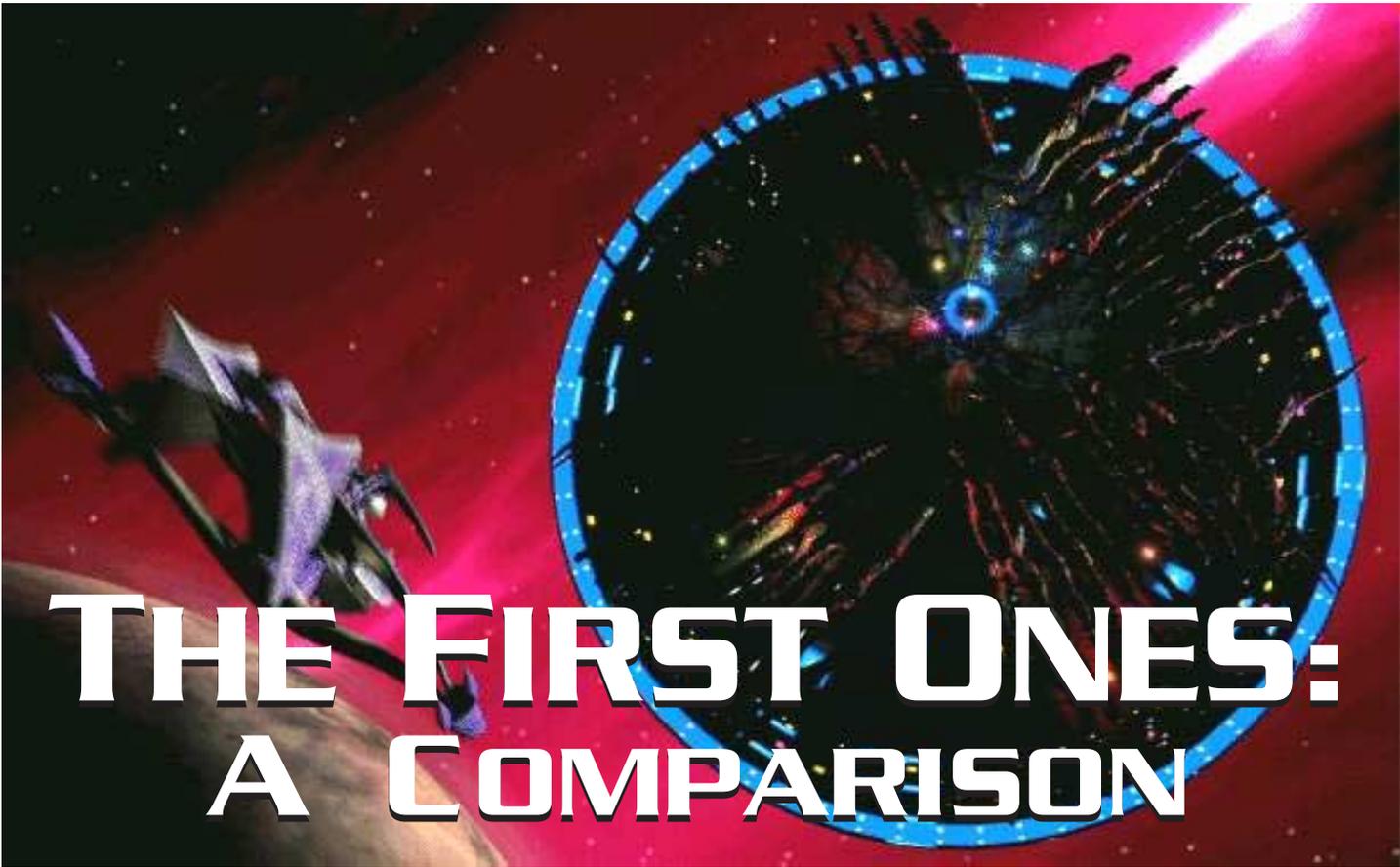
THE FIRST ONES: A COMPARISON

A Look at the Comparative Strengths of the First Ones
By Stephen Radlett

INTRODUCTION

This document is an attempt to determine the military and technological capabilities of the First Ones in relation to one another. This is just my attempt to draw some comparisons given the limited facts that we have, and as such there are sure to be mistakes and people who disagree. This is an exercise in postulation. It should be noted that only in a few cases will the younger or mid-born races appear in the tables as the Ancients abilities are beyond the comprehension of even the most advanced species today. The evolutionary level of a race is not considered here as the focus of this article is more to compare the technical and military capabilities of the First Ones rather than how highly evolved each species is.

COMPARITIVE AGES

It should be noted that these are just conjecture. Lorien states that he was old when "the molecules of your world (Earth) came together and called themselves land"[1] It is general consensus that the earth began to form 4.5-5 billion years ago and that the first discernable landmasses formed roughly 500 million years later. For this reason, Lorien and his people have been sentient for at least 4 billion years. It is stated in the Wars of the Ancients that Lorien's people were already old when the Triad formed[2] and that the order then went Shadows, Walkers, Vorlons, Mindriders, Torvalus and finally Kirishiac[3]. The Shadows are older than the Walkers (Slightly) but the Walkers beat the Shadows to hyperspace[4]. The series also states that the "Shadows were Ancient even when the First Ones were young", this statement comes from the Vorlon Perspective, so I have divided the First Ones into two groups of four, the Ancient First Ones, and the Younger First Ones with the Vorlons being the Oldest of the Younger First Ones. Wars of the Ancients tells us that The Walkers had long known of Hyperspace and that the Shadows had already carved out a vast territory when the Vorlons were making their first tentative steps into Hyperspace[5], that is to say

that they were at 20th Century Earth level when their elder brethren were hyperspace powers. Wars of the Ancients also states that "one technology discovered only after a race had progressed to a truly sophisticated level of science was that of Hyperspace"[6] for this reason I have placed the breaching of hyperspace at least 400 million years after attaining sentience given that "a race will have developed artificial gravity hundreds of thousands of years before perfecting a means of extra-dimensional travel" and "even the Minbari who have been in space for more than a thousand years, do not even have the smallest fraction of the knowledge required to achieve that goal." The other reason for such a long time in achieving the breakthrough is the enormous lifespan and low birth rate of the First Ones[7], there was simply no pressing need to travel the stars. The Ancients gained an intimate knowledge of their homeworld (in the case of the Walkers and some others) or were forced into a desperate struggle for survival (like the Shadows), before venturing forth into space.

RACE	SENTIENCE	HYPERSPACE
Lorien	4-5 BYA	N/A
Lorien's People	4 BYA	N/A
Triad	3 BYA	N/A
Shadows	2.9 BYA	2.49 BYA
Walkers	2.75 BYA	2.6 BYA
Vorlons	1.9 BYA	1.5 BYA
Mindriders	1.8 BYA	1.45 BYA
Torvalus	1.2 BYA	950 BYA
Kirishiac	1 BYA	570 BYA

POPULATION

This was, perhaps one of the most difficult area's to come up with some figures. In the end all that we are left with are guesses. The only First One race with a definitive population is the TRIAD who number only 3 beings. Lorien states in "INTO THE FIRE" that his race was immortal, yet still reproduced, but only a "handful each year" I have therefore given Lorien's People a Population of 1 and worked from there. It is the general consensus that the younger the race, the higher the birth-rate, there fore the Kirishiac have the greatest number (100) when compared to the other First Ones, this also explains why they were such a pain to fight in the Kirishiac War, there were *more* of them than all the other First Ones. Coming of the Shadows states that there are more Shadows than Vorlons (given the obvious insect heritage of the Shadows this does make sense,

even though the Shadows are older). Wars of the Ancients states that there is a high casualty rate when a race makes the evolutionary jump to non-corporeal beings and that the Walkers were more prepared for this than the others, therefore the Walker population is much higher than might be expected. I have included a figure for Mid and Younger born races as well, just for comparison.

RACE	POPULATION
Lorien's People	1
Triad	.0001
Shadows	40
Walkers	36
Vorlons	36
Mindriders	45
Torvalus	65
Kirishiac	100
Younger Race	1 000 000
Mid Born Race	10 000

TECHNOLOGY

Just who is the most technologically advanced among the First Ones? (Excluding Lorien and his people of course) The Triad? The Walkers? The Vorlons? The general consensus among the fans of B5Wars is that the Walkers are the most advanced race and this might be the case if we take what is stated in the "Fluff Text" at face value. What follows here is a breakdown of the various capabilities of their vessels. From this we shall try and determine who is the most advanced. There are SEVEN races involved, therefore each race will be given points based on where they end up in each category (1 being lowest 7 being highest). For example, if the Vorlons rank 5th in Armour, then they will receive 5 points. In the case of races having equal abilities, the rankings are added and an average score (rounded up) applied to each.

In this first series of tables we shall look at the absolute MAXIMUM value displayed on any of their ships SCS for Sensors, Armour, Self Repair and REAR thrust (i.e. Maximum *forward* acceleration).

RACE	MAX SENSORS
Mindriders	12
Kirishiac	14
Shadows	14
Torvalus	14
Vorlons	14
Triad	15
Walkers	16

RACE	MAX ARMOUR
Torvalus	6
Vorlons	7
Shadows	7
Walkers	7
Mindriders	8
Kirishiac	8
Triad	8

RACE	MAX SELF REPAIR
Torvalus	6
Kirishiac	6
Walkers	9
Vorlons	12
Shadows	16
Mindriders	18
Triad	24

RACE	REAR THRUST
Mindriders	12
Torvalus	12
Kirishiac	12
Triad	14
Walkers	16
Vorlons	24
Shadows	27

Not surprisingly, the Walkers have the most powerful Sensors, while the Shadows, with their unique form of propulsion far out-strip the other First Ones. The Hardened Advanced Armour of the Kirishiac is not counted at this point, just the values, unique technology such as Shading Fields or Hardened Advanced Armour will be dealt with later.

Next we look at the AVERAGE jump delay of each of the First Ones[8], this will give us an idea of their comparative Hyperspace capabilities.

RACE	AVERAGE JUMP DELAY
Walkers	5.4
Shadows	8
Mindriders	8.5
Triad	8.6
Kirishiac	8.8
Torvalus	9.5
Vorlons	10.4

Again, the Walkers come out on top, matching the Fluff statement that they were the first to discover Hyperspace, and should really be the most proficient with it. Also not surprising is that the Shadows come in second and that the Vorlons are LAST. This matches well, I feel, given that the Vorlon method of opening a

vortex is the same as that employed by the Younger Races (who have based their jump Tech on the Vorlon Jump Gates) implying that their basic hyperspace technology is simpler than that employed by the Shadows or Walkers.

Next we look at the most powerful primary and pulse weapon employed by each race. First we will look at the maximum potential damage, regardless of the Rate of Fire, then we shall divide this figure by the Rate of Fire giving each weapons maximum theoretical damage in a single round of combat. Note that the ability of the Shadows weapons to ignore Armour is not counted at this point.

PRIMARY WEAPONS

Not surprisingly the Hyper Plasma Cutter of the Triad is the most powerful ship mounted weapon in existence, just ahead of a fully charged Heavy Molecular Slicer. However, the story is slightly different if we look at the damage each round. The Triad are still out in front, but the Shadows drop back to fourth, behind the Walkers and the Vorlons.

PULSE WEAPONS

Next, each races Pulse weapon.[10] To the younger races, pulse weapons are considered a major break through, but what have the First Ones been able to do with this technology? I must admit I was reluctant to

PRIMARY WEAPONS TABLE

RACE	MOST POWEFUL WEAPON[9]	DAMAGE	ROF	RACE	DAMAGE/ROUND
Mindriders	ULTRA PULSE CANNON	72	1	Torvalus	49
Kirishiac	HYPERGRAVITON BLASTER	90	1	Mindriders	72
Torvalus	POWER LASER	98	1/2	Kirishiac	90
Vorlons	LIGHTNING CANNON (Mega)	144	1/1	Shadows	92
Walkers	LIGHNING ARRAY (4 Shot)	220	1/1	Vorlons	144
Shadows	HEAVY MOLECULAR SLICER	276	1/3	Walkers	220
Triad	HYPERPLASMA CUTTER	300	1	Triad	300

PULSE WEAPONS TABLE

RACE	MOST POWEFUL WEAPON[11]	DAMAGE	ROF	RACE	DAMAGE/ROUND
Kirishiac	NONE	n/a	n/a	Kirishiac	n/a
Mindriders	TRIOPTIC PULSAR	30	1/turn	Mindriders	30
Vorlons	DISCHARGE PULSAR	36	1/turn	Shadows	30
Torvalus	VOLLEY LASER	45	1/turn	Vorlons	36
Walkers	CHROMATIC PULSE DRIVER	54	1/turn	Torvalus	45
Triad	PLASMA DRIVER	66	1/turn	Walkers	54
Shadows	HVY PHASING PULSE CANNON	90	1/3 turns	Triad	66

ANTI-FIGHTER WEAPONS TABLE

RACE	MOST POWEFUL WEAPON[12]	DAMAGE	ROF	RACE	DAMAGE/ROUND
Vorlons	DISCHARGE GUN	22	4/turn	Triad	35
Shadows	MULTIPHASE CUTTER	22	3/turn	Kirishiac	36
Triad	ADVANCED PARTICLE BLAST GUN	35	2/turn	Torvalus	45
Kirishiac	ANTI GRAVITY BEAM	36	1/turn	Walkers	54
Mindriders	TELEKINETIC CUTTER	40	2/turn	Shadows	66
Torvalus	VOLLEY LASER	45	1/turn	Mindriders	80
Walkers	CHROMATIC PULSE DRIVER	54	1/turn	Vorlons	88

include these as the Kirishiac do not possess a pulse-type weapon, it was suggested that the Gravitic Torpedoes of the Kirishiac may be a substitute, however, these would still place them in last place and are not true Pulse weapons. I have created a Kirishiac pulse weapon, the Hypergraviton Pulsar, but decided not to include it in this analysis, preferring to stick to the published information. In the end, I have given the Kirishiac a score of 7 for their Ultra Matter Cannon and Gravitic Torpedoes under the Unique Technologies heading; I feel this will balance things out in the long run.

The Shadows Phasing Pulse Cannon is the most powerful pulse weapon possessed by the First Ones, however it's slow rate of fire pushes the Lords of Chaos back when Damage/Round is calculated.

ANTI-FIGHTER WEAPONS

Next, Anti Fighter weapons, note that we will not be considering "alternate fire mode" on weapons as we wish to determine the maximum damage in a single turn.

Possibly for the first time, the Vorlons hit the front in technological terms, their Discharge Gun, capable of firing 4 shots a turn if power is available is capable of dishing out more damage than any other race.

FIGHTER CAPABILITIES

Now let us look at each races Fighter Capabilities, note that Super Heavy Fighters are not counted, while special technology such as self repair or

EW is counted later under the Unique Tech heading.

RACE	ARMOUR – TOTAL
Mindriders	0
Torvalus	5
Vorlons	12
Shadows	13
Triad[16]	14
Walkers	14
Kirishiac	24

RACE	FREE THRUST
Vorlons	14
Kirishiac	14
Torvalus	14
Triad[13]	15
Walkers	15
Shadows	15
Mindriders	16

RACE	BONUSES(Combined total)
Kirishiac	25
Mindriders	28
Vorlons	27
Triad[14]	26
Shadows	28
Walkers	28
Torvalus	32

RACE	DAMAGE
Kirishiac	10
Mindriders	11
Walkers	12
Triad[15]	20
Vorlons	24
Shadows	28
Torvalus	28

Not surprisingly the Torvalus have the edge in firepower and Bonuses, while the Triad produce the most effective fighters.

UNIQUE TECHNOLOGIES

Finally let us look at unique technologies. Each race has a variety of technologies that no other race possesses like the Adaptive Armour of the Vorlons or the Shading Field of the Torvalus (Possibly the most advanced technology ever!). Each technology is given 1 point based on perceived effectiveness except in the case of a technology that can reduce a ships profile or

weapons chance to hit, this is given 1 point/point of shield due to the fact it greatly increases the survivability of a vessel.[17] In the case of a technology causing 3 or more effects, it's score is doubled due to the incredible efficiency of the device. We then add this figure to our scores rather than applying the 1-7 rating.

MINDRIDERS

Thought Shields (absorbs damage) 4
All ELINT (Constrained) 2
   Total 6

KIRISHIAC ....

Hardened Advanced Armour 4
5-pt Gravitic Shields 5
"Sweeping" weapons 2
Regenerative Fighters 2
Orbitals (regenerate even if completely destroyed) 3
May "add thrust" to weapons to increase effectiveness ... 4
Matter Weapons – Ultra Matter Cannon & Gravitic Torpedoes 7
Optional "All ELINT" 2
   Total 26

SHADOWS ....

Diffusers 4
Bio Drive System (All thrust any direction) 1
Armour Ignoring Weapons 2
Shield Ignoring Weapons 2
Vortex Disruptor 1
Fighter "bomb" 1
Fighters immune to drop-out 1
Half Phasing 2
   Total 14

WALKERS

Energy Draining Field
 ·Reduces Weapons Damage (-1 per hex; range 5 hexes) 5
 ·Drains power 1
· Drains Thrust 1
· Drains EW 1
· Forces fighter drop-out 1
  TOTAL EDF (times 2 for efficiency) 18
Multi Dimensional Jump Drive 1
Jump Capable Fighters (10 turns) 2
EW Capable Fighters 1
EW Detector 1
   Total **23**

TRIAD

7-pt EM Shields 7
All ELINT 4
Structural Self Repair 1
Lend Self Repair 1
Super Heavy Fighters (24 pt. Armour; EM Shield) 3
   Total..16

VORLONS

Adaptive Armour..3
Weapons Force Fighter Drop Out...1
Limited Autonomy of vessels 2
Capacitor System 1
6-pt EM Shields 6
May "add power" to weapons to increase effectiveness 4
Super Heavy Fighters (Adaptive Armour, EM Shield, -4 drop out)....4
   Total..21

TORVALUS

Shading Field
· Reduces Profile...4
· Acts as 4-pt EM Shield 4
· Acts as Minbari Jammer (effective against Advanced Sensors) 4
   Total Shading Field (x2 for efficiency) 24
Transverse Drive 1
Agile vessels 1
Jump Capable Fighters (24 turns) 1
High Initiative value 1
Fighters immune to drop-out..1
   Total..29
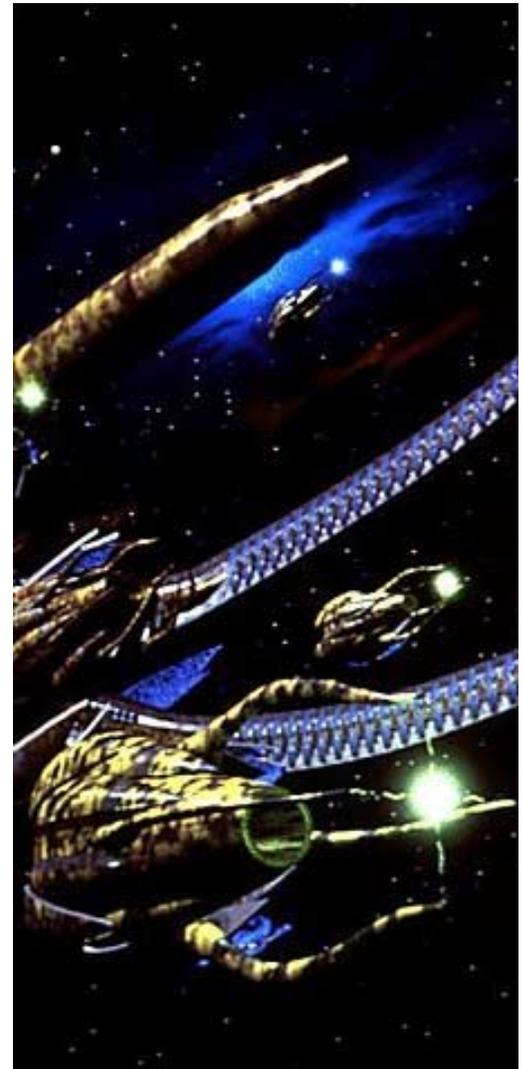
Finally we add up the total scores to determine the technological rankings among the first ones.

RACE TECHNOLOGY: FINAL SCORE

Mindriders	57
Kirishiac	68
Vorlons	77
Torvalus	82
Shadows	86
Triad	92
Walkers	101 (100)

I think this is a fairly accurate representation of the First Ones technological ability with the Walkers far and away the most advanced, and the Kirishiac, who are the youngest, coming in as being more advanced than the older Mindriders whom did not develop their full technological potential due to their early evolution to non-corporeal beings,[18] but still behind most of the other First Ones in terms of technological ability[19]. The Torvalus rank above the Vorlons, even though the Vorlons are substantially older thanks to their incredible stealth abilities. A race that has found a way to defeat advanced sensors must know what they are doing technologically! In this ranking, young races would probably rank no higher than 10[20], with the Mid Born coming it at a maximum of 20. For arguments sake we shall say that the THIRDSPACE ALIENS rank at 110, seen as Wars of the Ancients states that even the Walkers avoid them! Technically, the Triad don't use technology and could probably be ranked higher than they are; however, this ranking reflects what we have *seen* from them, they also try and make their

'automatons' beatable, as they want to teach not destroy. If we take the scale as being 1-100, the Walkers are at the absolute maximum technical development possible for beings from out universe. Given what Wars of the Ancients says about the Hyperspace Tech Tree, I would postulate that a race would need to be at a Tech Level of at least 40-50 before they would be able to discover Hyperspace Technology on their own.

MILITARY

A race's "military machine" is based on their maximum technology and their population. That is to say fully mobilizing their entire population and their technical ability towards conflict. In this table we must ignore the Triad due to their unique population of only 3 beings. This does not reflect the First Ones true military strength, just their ability to support a full-scale war. This score could also be called the races Industrial Base

RACE	MILITARY MACHINE[21]
	(Population * Technology)
Triad	N/A
Mindriders	2565
Vorlons	2772
Shadows	3360
Walkers	3636
Torvalus	5330
Kirishiac	6800

Naturally the Kirishiac rank much higher than their nearest rivals and more than 2000 points above the Walkers and Shadows due to their massive population in comparison to the other First Ones. I feel that this reflects the information we are given about the Kirishiac War, that the Kirishiac were perhaps technologically inferior to the other First Ones, but they had a huge population in comparison and an enormous Military/Industrial Complex that would enable them to hold there own against almost any foe.

Now let us look at the First Ones actual military strength. This will be based on the Combat Point value of their ships; their weapons damage ability and technology level. First of all, their ships Point Value, firstly the highest pointed 'main' ship, which is to say non-limited deployment, and then their highest pointed vessel overall. Note that this does not include things like mobile bases or super weapons like the planet killers (which are unpointed anyway). As before we give each race a score between 1 and 7 depending on where they fall in the ranking for each category.

RACE	MAIN VESSEL[22] POINT VALUE
Vorlons	3250 – Heavy Cruiser
Kirishiac	3400 – Lord Ship
Shadows	3750 – Heavy Cruiser (Primordial)
Mindriders	3750 – Thoughtfoce
Torvalus	4175 – Dark Knife
Triad	5175 – Triumvarion
Walkers	5400 – Traveller

RACE	MOST POWERFUL VESSEL[23]
Torvalus	4175 – Dark Knife
Vorlons	5000 – Dreadnought
Walkers	5400 – Traveller
Shadows	5500 – Primordial Dreadnought
Kirishiac	5700 – Kingship
Triad	6400 – Archangel
Mindriders	8300 – Minds Eye

Next, who possesses the highest pointed fighter scale vessel? It should be noted that the Super Heavy fighters of the Vorlons and Triad Order will not be included, as to tip the balance, instead we will limit ourselves to those fighters capable of flight level combat, that is heavy fighters or less.

RACE	FIGHTER POINT VALUE
Shadows	150 – Spitfire Medium Fighters
Mindriders	160 – Thought Projections
Kirishiac	160 – Warrior Projectiles
Vorlons	175 – Heavy Fighters
Triad	175 – Wraiths
Walkers	210 – Mapmakers
Torvalus	260 – Stilettos

Not surprisingly the "ultra light laser with an engine attached", also known as a Stiletto Drone is the most heavily pointed non-Super Heavy fighter in the game, while the Shadows come in dead last this time round.

Finally we add the total scores given here with those for the weapons damage potential given in the technology section to determine a final military ranking for each race. Due to the fact that their "Military Machine" score was more than 25% greater than the nearest rival (Torvalus), I decided to award the Kirishiac 10 points rather than the usual 7 for that achievement.

RACE	MILITARY STRENGTH: FINAL SCORE
Mindriders	18
Torvalus	23
Vorlons	23
Shadows	24
Kirishiac	25
Walkers	31
Triad	32

This gives us a fairly good reflection of the military strength of the First Ones, with the three most ancient races more advanced technologies giving them the edge, but the Kirishiac's raw numbers putting them ahead of several of their seniors (including the Vorlons) and thus explaining why they might have been considered a potential threat to the other First Ones: They had a powerful military and powerful Military

Machine (Industrial Base) and their total military strength was more than equal to that of the Shadows, the oldest non-transcended race in the galaxy and only just behind that of the and Walkers, but outstripped the Vorlons, Mindriders and Torvalus. In reality, the First Ones were actually fairly close militarily, with M/I Base bringing them almost into balance. It is the superior technological abilities that truly set them apart from one another. In this ranking, the Third Space Aliens might rank as equal to or just above the Triad. The Triad are only just ahead of the Walkers; this reflects more their desire to teach others than their actual ability and strength (based on what they have shown). In reality, the Triad could probably destroy any of the other First Ones with ease, if that were their goal.

A FINAL SUMMARY

I have included a guess at the TEEP levels of the First Ones, based on some of the published information. I feel that the older/more evolved the race the more powerful their telepaths, also a greater percentage of the population would be telepathic.[24] I have also added some generalisations for the Mid and Younger Born races for comparison here.

As was stated at the beginning of this essay, these are only my theories, should you disagree, that is your decision. I do feel that this does appear to be a fairly accurate representation of the First Ones abilities given the limited information we have. I hope this satisfies people's curiosity about the First Ones. I certainly enjoyed writing it.

Who are the *most powerful* first ones? I leave that up to you…[25]

(Footnotes)

[1] Into the Fire
[2] Wars of the Ancients, page 43
[3] Wars of the Ancients
[4] Wars of the Ancients and various JMS Posts
[5] Wars of the Ancients, Page 8
[6] Wars of the Ancients page 3
[7] With lifespans stretching into millions of years, if the Walkers progressed at the same rate as humanity they would have achieved faster than light travel within a single generation!
[8] We add up the Jump Delay for every ship in a fleet and then divide by the number of ships
[9] Maximum Potential Damage
[10] Note that the Mindriders Ultra Pulse Cannon is not included again.
[11] Maximum Potential Damage
[12] Maximum Potential Damage
[13] WRAITH fighter
[14] WRAITH fighter
[15] WRAITH fighter
[16] WRAITH fighter

RACE	SENTIENCE	HYPERSPACE	POPULATION	TECHNOLOGY	MILITARY	TEEP (max)
Lorien	4-5 BYA	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Unknown
Loriens People	4 BYA	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	Unknown
Triad	3 BYA	N/A	.0001	?89?	32	25
Shadows	2.9 BYA	2.49 BYA	40	84	24	16
Walkers	2.75 BYA	2.6 BYA	36	101	31	16
Vorlons	1.9 BYA	1.5 BYA	36	77	23	15
Mindriders	1.8 BYA	1.45 BYA	45	57	18	20
Torvalus	1.2 BYA	950 BYA	65	82	23	14
Kirishiac	1 BYA	570 BYA	100	61	25	13
Mid Born Race	<500 MYA	>1000 Years ago	100 000+	11-20	Varies	13
Younger Race	<5 MYA	<1000 Years Ago	1 000 000+	1-10	Varies	12

[17] Examples of such Technology would be Shields (EM, Gravitic, Shading), Shadow Diffusers or the Walker Energy Draining Fields.

[18] The upshot being that they are considered the most highly evolved of the First Ones and closest to the Transcended Triad and Lorien's People.

[19] Wars of the Ancients makes it fairly clear in several chapters that once the other First Ones, particularly the Walkers, Shadows and Triad really flexed their muscles, the Kirishiac were overwhelmed "before they had even realised it"

[20] Some quick guesses would put the Narn Regime at 5-6, the Earth Alliance at 6, the Centauri Republic at 8 and the Minbari Federation (Olderst of the Younger races or Youngest of the Mid Born?) at something like 10-12, the Drahk are probably ranked at 10-12 as well, at crossover point between Younger and Mid-Born races.

[21] That is how many people can be fielded multiplied by the races with their best technology. It could also be referred to as the races Military/Industrial Complex.

[22] NON Limited Deployment

[23] Non Variant (Base Hull)

[24] The entire Mindriders race is telepathic, while I seem to recall Bester stating that maybe only 1 in every 100 000 humans were born with noticeable telepathic talents.

[25] If you were to use the figures I give, the Triad are far and away the most powerful, followed by the Walkers and Shadows, the Torvalus come next, then the Vorlons and finally the Kirishiac and then the Mindriders.

* * *

The Vincer Gunship

by David Ainsworth

Following the defeat of the Narn Regime, Lord Refa presided over a series of border wars intended to expand the Centauri Republic's holdings. While these combats generally stayed far away from Minbari space, Refa remained concerned that the Minbari would eventually stir themselves, and commanded a small team of researchers to develop an attack ship to improve Centauri chances in such a conflict.

The research team stuck with this thankless task quickly decided that the Minbari jammer technology was beyond their ability to defeat. Attempts to improve the range of the Battle Laser resulted in such low damage that the weapon was all but useless; Heavy Arrays and Twin Arrays were too close-range and interceptible to boot.

Then the team struck upon the idea of adapting principles similar to those the Brakiri used in creating their Gravitic Lance weapon. If a similar weapon could be made out of two Battle Lasers, the weapon would have increased range and damage potential, and the sustained fire mode could mitigate the effects of the jammer. A prototype cruiser (a heavily modified Primus), code named "Vincer," was outfitted with versions of the new Battle Lance weapon.

The research team encountered a number of problems. The weapons needed so much space for cooling systems, beam focusing, and the like, that the entire forward section of the Primus had to be removed to make room. Even with this section (and its Twin Arrays) removed, the system proved so intensely power-hungry that the ship was stripped of most of its other power-using systems, including the jump drive. The Battle Lance itself had a fairly good firing arc, though not quite as good as a Battle Laser, but the bulky systems associated with the weapon cut the arcs of the ship's remaining Twin Arrays.

Before the prototype could be tested, Lord Refa was found dead on Narn, and his house disgraced. The ensuing political scandal doomed the Vincer project, and work on the Battle Lance was shelved.

* * *

Robotech Continues:
The Invid Invasion
By Paul Brown

Invid Dawn: The Third Robotech War

After their war against the Robotech Masters, the Southern Cross and the United Earth Government were left devastated after the climatic battle. When the Invid came several years later, alerted to the planet through their detection of the flower of life, the Earth was split into many small territories, fending for themselves with no central government. Against the millions of Invid invaders, the Earth would have only one hope of victory, but Robotech Expeditionary Force was light years away and completely unaware of the renewed assault against a home many had not seen in years . . .

Captain Bennet felt a slight surge through his body as the Super Dimensional Destroyer transited to real-space. After months of travel in a hyperspace fold, they had arrived at Earth, ordered by Admiral Hunter to re-establish contact with their home world. The Expeditionary Force had set out to make contact and eventually peace with the Robotech masters, but instead found themselves marooned in alien territory, later discovering that the very people they sought had passed them on their way to Earth.

"Operations, launch Veritechs and confirm that all stations are battle ready."

"Aye, aye."

Bennet paused, the sensory information from their post-fold scans were still coming in. Impatiently, he turned to the sensor stations, "any sign of the Master's fleet?"

"Negative Captain."

"Captain Bennet," he turned to the young communications officer, a member of his crew who was probably seeing the world for the first time, "Captain, the UEG isn't responding to any of our hails."

"What about the Southern Cross? Surely they would have detected our de-fold."

"No transmissions of any kind, Captain."

No transmissions, no Earth ships or installations in orbit, what the hell was going on? Bennet wondered. Had the Southern Cross come and the Masters gone to war, was there no one left to respond or were the masters merely lying in wait for them.
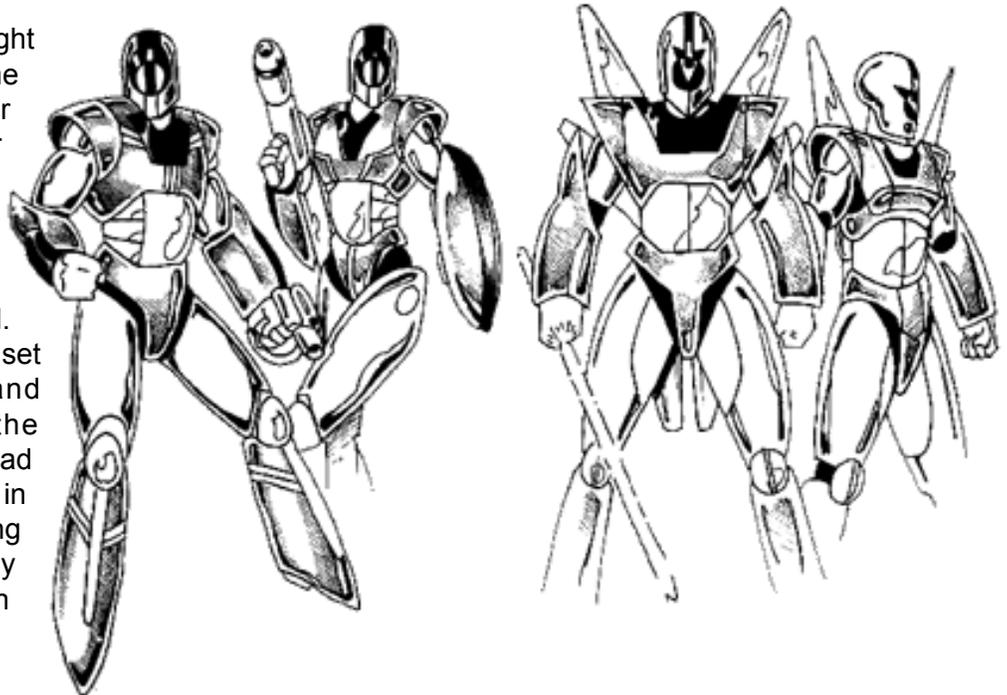
"Sir, I'm picking up unusual energy readings from the planet."

"Unusual? In what way."

"It's hard to say sir, initial scans have revealed an unusual lack of energy emissions altogether. The planet seems to be essentially powerless, save for a few points scattered across the surface."

"Even from Monument city?"

The sensory officer frowned, "there's an energy source near the recorded location of the city but not from the location itself. "

Bennet was growing increasingly alarmed, "lock in on the area and give me a detailed scan." A few moments passed before the data began to come up on the screen, when the image of a glowing circle appeared on the screen, Bennet didn't need anything further.

"The Invid, damn it! But how-"

"Captain, we've got multiple ship's coming out of de-fold all around us. Fold signatures match up with Invid mecha transports." As the officer spoke the image on the screen changed to show one of the Invid transports several thousand kilometres away, once it had materialised the disc-shaped transport opened up like some great clam, revealing hordes of mecha beneath. In only seconds the space around the small REF fleet would be surrounded by hundreds of Invid mecha, closing fast.

"It's a trap! All batteries fire at will, prepare for emergency fold. We've got to get word back to the fleet."

"Fold Drive still recharging."

Bennet initiated emergency manoeuvres as the Invid mecha quickly closed in. Over the chatter of defensive fire he could hear the first damage impacting against the hull. The few impacts soon increased in intensity and frequency, operations yelled something about a loss in hull integrity, but Bennet was only focused on the fold recharge and the tactical display.

A moment before the drives were ready he gave the signal to disengage. Expecting the familiar lurch of the transition into the fold, he was
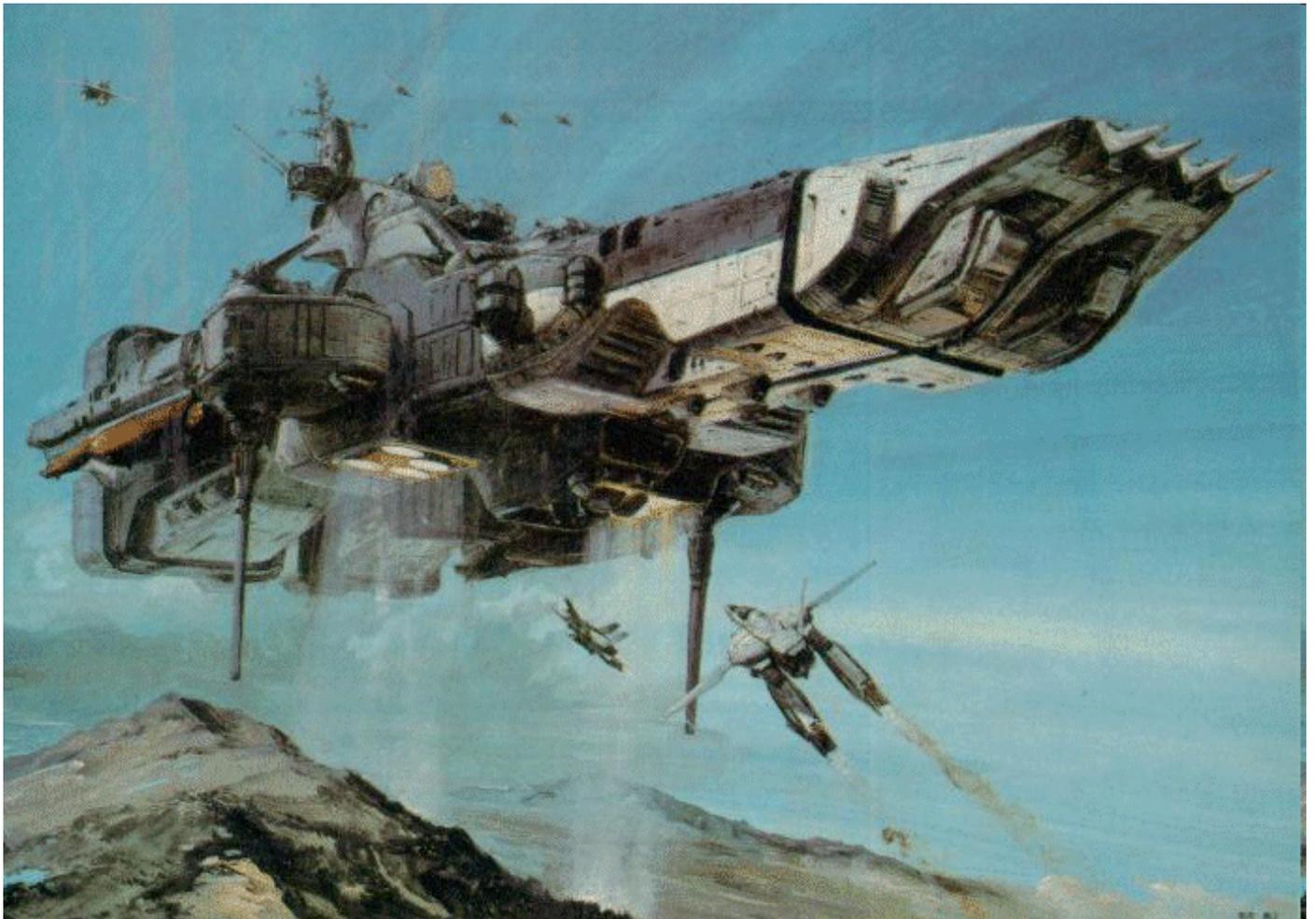
instead thrown violently into his harness as the hull began to buckle and collapse. Someone screamed as the hurricane of cold vacuum began to flood into the bridge, but the cold was short lived and proceeded quickly by the fire that engulfed the Destroyer from bow to stern.

Tackling the Invid

One of the greatest problems in converting Robotech lies in the very nature of the story line itself. Robotech is really three separate story lines, independent of one another but re-written to have some semblance of a relationship to one another. One consequence of this problem occurs is in the trying to maintain some balance in terms of technology. The transformable Earth fighters of the Invid storyline are supposedly half the size of the Zentraedi-era Valkyries, yet naturally pack much more firepower. If I put much more firepower on a fighter in the limited scope of B5Wars it'll quickly move towards the equivalent of an ancient in technology. This isn't even accounting for possible conversions from Macross II like the ridiculously powerful Metal Siren. The Palladium RPG is little to no use in this regard due to large discrepancies, like a motorcycle helmet having the same armour value as a Zentraedi Battlepod.

The Invid meanwhile, who are the focus of this article, presented further problems. While the new Veritechs are half the size of the old ones, the biggest Invid are only about equal in size to these Veritechs. While the smallest mecha are far more minute in size with pitiful excuses for weaponry. But in addressing these problems, I kept fairly simple. I've always viewed fighters from a certain point of view. There are only two things that distinguish a Heavy Fighter from a Medium Fighter, that is jinking limit and initiative bonus. While fighters are generally arranged by structure value, I also believe that the thing that defines a heavy fighter for instance, is not its structure or armour level but it's initiative and manoeuvrability, within reason of course. As a result the Invid mecha I've created tend to be fairly small in class, with the smallest, the scout craft only at Ultra Light Fighter size. Some may argue that they're too small to even fit into this class, but I prefer to keep things simple.

Invid Physiology

Invid warriors are essentially a hive race, controlled by a central Queen with various sub-queens helping out. Invid have several levels of development.

Depending upon how developed they are, they will have certain levels of abilities and deficiencies in various areas. Invid range from small, dependant slug like creatures who require direction in battle but feel no fear, to the human-like Invid who are fully independent in thought and have the same desire of self-preservation as the average human pilot. This is represented in their units by dropout bonuses and initiative penalties in their more plentiful and expendable fighters, to more average statistics for the advance Invid pilots.

Protoculture Targetting Bonus

The Invid demonstrated an ability in the series to actively sense any source of protoculture-powered weaponry or mecha fielded by the resistance forces. This has been translated over to their B5Wars equivalents as well. Mecha equipped with such abilities will have two offensive bonuses: one for targeting protoculture powered units and one for targeting normal units. This is not so much a bonus for the Invid against other Robotech units, but rather a penalty against non-Robotech forces as the higher statistic is only average. For simplicities sake, consider all Robotech units to be protoculture powered unless otherwise specified. Against B5 or other genre units, use the lower value.

Fighter Availability

Invid craft tend to have varying levels of availability with more expendable units appearing in greater numbers. Some fighters are defined as either Uncommon or Rare units. For these flights, deploy them in the same numbers as you would ship or fighter variants though using the base as overall Invid

deployment. For example, a Gurab Trooper with an Uncommon rating could have one flight deployed for every three ligaa (the only common Invid fighter).

Invid Units

Mollusk Transport

The 'Mollusk' as Earth pilots have dubbed it, is essentially an FTL-capable landing craft. Though a fairly small craft, it can deliver a large number of mecha to the battlefield very quickly. The compliment typically consists of eighteen boosted Scout mecha, but can be double loaded with up to thirty six un-boosted Scouts. In order to deploy the craft it must first open the hull. This makes the transport a much larger target while at the same time exposes its berthed mecha to enemy fire. Typically however, the mecha can be launched far faster than enemy craft can destroy the transports.

Note that despite having a large hangar for a small craft, the Mollusk has no means to maintain the mecha for any length of time. The stage-1 Invid, which are born into, and are physically dependant of their craft, literally stand shoulder to shoulder in the cramped hangar before launch. Though they can be held in their berth for a fair period of time, the Mollusks are typically only loaded immediately prior to battle.

ligaa (Armoured) Scout

The ligaa is the main light mecha of the Invid armies. Its most basic version is equipped with hand to hand combat capabilities only, and is thus an easy target for enemy craft. The Armoured Version is identical save for the equipping of a pair of plasma cannons to either shoulder. Together they aren't very powerful, but in the high numbers that the Invid employ, a swarm of ligaa can down any enemy ship.
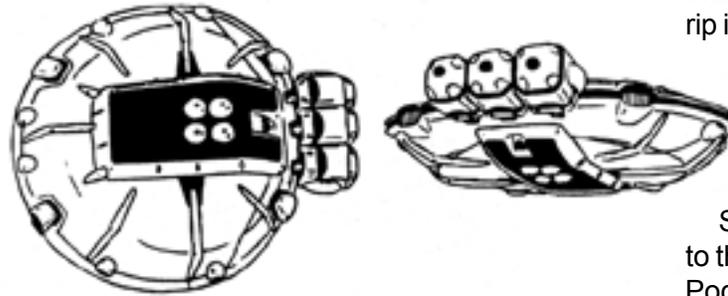
ligaa Boosted Mecha

Most Invid craft are designed for atmospheric operations and thus prove unwieldy in space combat. In order to compensate, the Invid employ ligaas equipped with boosters in place of their legs. With considerable speed and manoeuvrability they're dangerous opponents for even the state of the art Alpha Veritechs employed by the RDF. Though woefully armed (or not at all) like the standard ligaa, they're always deployed in superior numbers.

Gurab (Shock) Troopers
Uncommon Unit

The Gurab is the real meat of the Invid army. Though still fragile and woefully armoured by Earth standards, it packs considerably more firepower than the smaller ligaa in the Shock Trooper variant. Even when unarmed, the Trooper is still a potent threat, especially to ground forces with its powerful pincer claws which are able to slice through armour with easy. The Invid Troopers often make up for the lack of manoeuvrability in space by simply landing on enemy craft and proceeding to rip it apart with physical attacks.

Gamo Pincer Command Unit
Rare Unit

Similar in design and function to the Zentraedi Glaug Officer's Pod, the Gamo Pincer provides direction and command to the less-developed Invid under their command. For firepower they mount a pair of powerful laser cannons that act as one on enemy units, backed up by the same plasma weapons that are found on smaller Invid craft. Though well armoured, the Gamo can not take a great deal of punishment. And though an effective unit, it is not fielded in relatively large numbers.

Gosu Royal Command Battloid
Rare Unit

The Gosu is the most fearsome craft the Invid have fielded. Piloted by the humanoid-type Invid, the Gosu is fast, well armoured and armed for a variety of opponents. Primary weaponry is a hand-held plasma rifle, backed up by a variety of small, primarily short-ranged missiles. A second defensive laser turret covers the Gosu's rear arc from enemy craft. Luckily for the Earth's resistance fighters and the REF, the Gosu is an elite unit and fielded in fairly low numbers.

* * *

Homeworld 2 Mod Review

Star Wars Warlords For Homeworld 2
Review by Steve Cross

The MC80 Memory of Endor turned and continued to pound the Imperial Dreadnought with its Turbolaser batteries. The MC90 Mon Remona joined in, as did the waiting X-Wings. The Dreadnought, outclassed and stripped of protection, continued to fight, but it was a futile gesture. The Dreadnought was torn apart by the combined firepower of the two Rebel capital ships and the fighters assailing it. Admiral Kortor smiled as the surviving Imperial ships began to fall back. The Imperials had obviously thought that the Alliance Fleet was weak enough that its older, second-line warships could defeat them.

"Admiral, the hyperspace scanner is detecting something, an Imperial ship".

"Tell the X-Wings that they have a new target. I want whatever this ship is to be pounded as soon as it jumps in".

Kortor's chair turned to face the main viewing bay to see what was going to jump in. His heart dropped into his stomach when he saw the new arrival: a star destroyer, much larger than any he had ever seen before. A ship nearly the size of the Executor had jumped in directly in front of his flotilla. TIE Interceptors issued from its hanger bay, a veritable swarm of fighter craft surging forward from the menace. An additional three Imperator IIs flanked the Imperial monster.

The Imperials wasted no time in opening fire. The Endor shuddered as hundreds of Turbolaser bolts ripped through the shields and pummeled the hull. After a few seconds of punishment the ship simply came apart.

You smiled contented as your ships rip the frontline of the Rebel defenses apart. There is nothing between you and the Rebel shipyards, this game is over.

Having seen the various Babylon 5 mods for Homeworld, the Star Wars: Warlords mod is the first complete total conversion for Homeworld 2. The people behind the Warlord mod have gone all out

Thirdspace

and replaced each and every vessel in Homeworld 2 with a Star Wars equivalent. You start off with a fighter factory, refinery vessel and a gaggle of mole miners. You can then research anything and everything from TIE Defenders to the monolithic World Devastators. Using the impressive Homeworld 2 engine to its fullest, the Warlord mod is graphically impressive.

The basic background of the game mod is that the Rebels *failed* in their attack on Endor. Whilst the Death Star was destroyed, the Emperor escaped having captured Luke. Leia and Solo died on Endor and the Rebel fleet was shattered. All is not going well for the Rebellion.

The size of some of the more advanced vessels is mind boggling and taking down a Super Class Star Destroyer is no easy feat. What's more surprising is that this mod is 80% complete and is still missing a few elements. These missing areas do not affect the game in any way as it's mainly ship description text that is missing.

There is no storyline in the mod; it's just a pure skirmish or multiplayer mod, although I believe that there is going to be a campaign option added at a later date.

The most conspicuous omission in the Warlord mod is the lack of music. However, you can do your part to help by humming the Imperial March as your Imperator Star Destroyers, surrounded by a swarm of TIE fighters, descend on their doomed Rebel opponents.

If you have Homeworld 2 and like Star Wars I fully recommend that you download this mod as it is very well done. The designers have done a superb job of bringing Star Wars into the Homeworld 2 game system. The file is 118 MB in size and is self-installing. It does not override your current Homeworld 2 files or ships, so you can continue playing the normal game with Warlord waiting in the background whenever you fancy some mindless killing.

The mod can be found at http://warlords.swrebellion.com/

* * *

The Rumor Mill

The following snippet was originally posted to the jmsnews.com forums:

Just thought I would let you all know, that my inside source reported to me yesterday that last Friday, WB and JMS submitted to ILM to bid for TMoS (The Memory of Shadows) *Visual Effects. Reportedly, they have also asked WETA to bid. This means we're getting closer to the announcement hopefully.*

If they're locking in FX companies, then they should annouce fairly soon.

Just thought I'd share.

CE

There is no way to substantiate these claims, but if true it would seem to indicate that the project is still moving ahead.

No Recasting for Franklin

With the recent death of Richard Biggs, Babylon 5's Dr. Stephen Franklin, there has been much speculation about whether or not the Franklin character would be recast for "The Memory of Shadows."

JMS responded succinctly in a Usenet message dated August 7, 2004 for "That character will not be recast."

This means that any interaction that the Franklin character was to have in the movie is likely to either be eliminated or a new character created to take his place.

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The Stracynski Report
8/23/2004

Just some quick, minor updates....

In the comics world…Supreme Power 12 came out last week, and the next Amazing Spider-Man comes out this week, and I'm very happy with how both of them came out. It's a good time to jump on board.

I was recently in NYC for a big retreat/conference with Marvel about upcoming projects, and while there are several I can't talk about yet, one thing I can mention is that I'll be doing a Silver Surfer miniseries that should shake people up a bit.

There's also going to be something very weird and funny coming from Marvel soon, which will give them cause to never, ever invite me to one of these things ever again.

Also, the first of the last three Rising Stars issues comes out next month as well as the co-written first issue of the Doctor Strange miniseries.
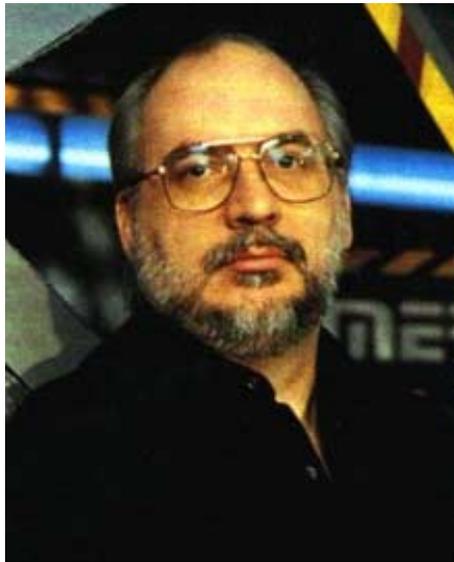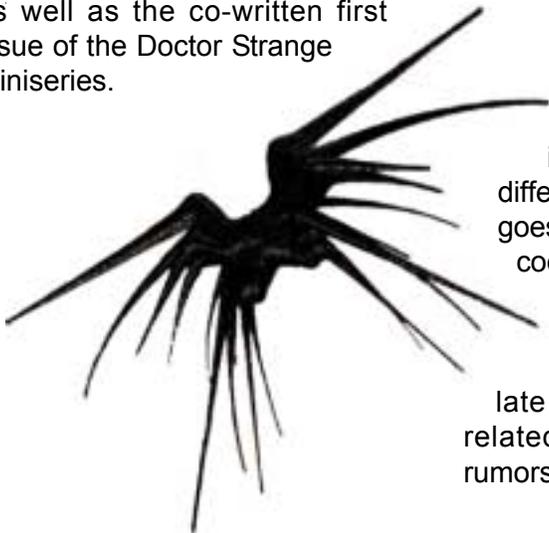
On the TV front, I have final confirmation that the last batch of Jeremiah episodes will be airing on the regular Showtime channels starting September 3rd. The episodes are:

Sept 3: Crossing Jordan and Running On Empty
Sept 10:: The Question and The Past Is Prologue
Sept 17: The Face In The Mirror and State Of The Union
Sept 24: Interregnum (Parts 1 and 2)

All of them are really strong episodes, and I'm glad to see them finally being aired.

Pending contractual negotiations and formal pickup by the networks involved, I've been offered two different series, so we'll see which goes first. They could both be very cool to work on, but one of them could be insanely successful. I should know more about this situation in late October. (Neither is Trek-related, just to nip any potential rumors in the bud.)

Starting sometime in October, in an unrelated project, our friends in Britain can expect to see me hanging about on-and-off in the general vicinity of London. Just, y'know, workin', doin' stuff.

I've also tentatively agreed (pending working out some details) to appear at FedCon in Bonn, Germany in May of next year. In an unrelated story, my radio series, The City of Dreams, will also apparently be airing soon on German radio. For those of you who can speak the langauge, you can get more information at http://www.sf-radio.net/radio/spezial/

The next of my novels to be reprinted from ibooks/Simon and Schuster is Tribulations, due out in December, which can be pre-ordered at Amazon.com.

Volume 2 of the Supreme Power collection, also due out in December, can *(also be pre-ordered at Amazon.)*

Buddy the Miracle Cat (or Buddy TMC as he is known to his hip-hop friends) celebrated his first re-birthday last month, and has decided that he wants to be a shark instead of a cat. There's clear plastic covering one of the floors while work is being done, and he loves nothing more than to get under the plastic (lots of holes for air, don't worry) and circle around me like a shark, over and over. It's all he wants to do anymore.

Oh, and in the next week or so I should be turning in the next-to-final draft of the TMoS screenplay.

jms

* * *

Credits

Coming Next Issue...

MISSING PIECES

Next issue, we take a look at some of the ship submissions that have been building up over the summer! A new look at the Lumati and Antareans, the Star Fleet Battles Hydrans, and much more await you in the next issue of The Great Machine!

As always, remember to send your submissions to submissions@firenebula.com. You, too, may help solve a mystery! Oops, wrong program!

Submission Deadline: September 20, 2004