



**BOOK OF THE RAT**  
**by Garrett Lepper**  
**Reviewed by John Foody**

Why are the Skaven so popular? In part it is due to the fact that Rats summon up images of uncontrolled decay and disease, images that James Herbert successfully used in his trilogy. Many people fear rats, carriers of plague and harbingers of decay, for who knows what activities their scratching behind the walls covers. All will have cringed as Winston Smith in 1984 had a cage of rats strapped to his head, ready to eat into his face.

The dictionary also tells us that we have applied the word "rat" to 'A despicable, sneaky person, especially one who betrays or informs upon associates.' Although some people will defend rats as being fine lovable pets, the majority still associate them with the dark and unknown, alien minds scurrying beneath their feet.

In the Skaven, Warhammer managed to build on these fears to give us an excellent race and enemy. Unlike Orcs or Trolls, we know of rats and their habits, which makes them far more effective. As an enemy, they are physically not overly powerful but still very much to be feared, for they are everywhere in large numbers and sometimes armed with strange devices.

What really makes them excellent opponents in a campaign is the knowledge that unlike the other creatures, all their movements and plots are part of some overarching conspiracy. Machinations unknown to everyone but the Skaven themselves. A plot to rule the world it may be, but behind such a cliché the servants of the Horned Rat know something we don't.

A supplement on Skaven would need to be a balanced work not taking away the Skaven's mystique, and this is especially true of a work that is designed for the running of Skaven PC's. Garrett Lepper's BOTR mostly succeeds in this. It contains both the rules and background needed to run such a campaign.

This, he hopes, will allow greater scope for treachery and politics within the game. He covers Skaven society and psychology, going into further detail about the various clans. He details Skaven careers, Magic, the effects of Warpstone and more.

The Book of the Rat achieves the greater part of its aim in that does provide a solid basis in which a Skaven campaign can be run, concentrating more on the internal wrangling of the Skaven as opposed to their wider plots (although this can easily be added). My only minor criticism is that GM wanting to run a Skaven campaign would certainly need to do a fair bit of preparation, but this is only a work in progress, the author's list of future inclusions should make it an exceptional work. Most GM's will never run such a campaign, but will be interested in knowing how useful this will be in an above ground campaign. Many parts will be very useful, specifically the Bestiary, the list of Skaven strongholds and the Warpstone corruption table. The rest will certainly give you much food for thought in the motivations of your Skaven and their plots. Some of the ideas in the BOTR are a bit too 'Warhammer Fantasy Battle', but these can easily be left out. Also the reliance of Warpstone in Skaven culture is acknowledged but its use seems a little too casual.

Overall this is a good addition to WFRP literature and well worth getting hold of a copy.

"The Book of the Rat" can be downloaded by anonymous ftp from the Warhammer Archives. In plain english, this means that you need to find the web site at [www.warhammer.net](http://www.warhammer.net) where the file's stored, and copy it to disk from there.