

WARPSTONE

The independent magazine for Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay



GM's Screen & Reference Pack Published by Hogshead Publishing Reviewed by John Foody

The GM screen is a time honoured-tradition that games companies release as a money spinner and schedule filler. This is usually early in games' lives but, of course, WFRP being WFRP it didn't happen like that here. So here we finally have it, a decade later. How much use these screens are is a matter of opinion of course. I dislike them, as they erect an intrusive barrier between players and GM. For WFRP, I find them even less essential. The WFRP rules are generally easy to remember and many groups play a rules-lite version anyway. For secret dice roles you can always use your hand for cover. A GM's screen has to be able to offer more than just a screen, so Hogshead have included two reference booklets containing various new gaming aids.

But first the screen itself. It is made up of four panels of heavy card (and it actually stands up, unlike some!), with the players' side in full colour. This contains two pictures, neither of which I particularly like, and a full colour map. This isn't overly inspiring, but is quite useful, showing all the Old World, including most of the locations mentioned in Warhammer releases from WFB and WFRP. On the GM's side is a collection of charts divided into three categories: Characters, Combat and Movement. Both the characters and combat section are useful, but I've always found Movement detail boringly tedious. I would also have liked to have seen a number of charts on the player's side to take away some of the responsibility from the GM for checking rules.

Also included with the screen is a reference pack. This consists of two sixteen-page booklets containing various resources for both GM and players. The first of these contains an index, almanac and the equipment price list from the rulebook. The index covers the main rulebook and is excellent, comprehensively covering all areas from skills to the names of characters used in examples of play. The almanac is also an excellent aid for players and GM. It can be used to plot campaigns or to act as a diary. If used, it will help give everyone a real sense of the passing of time within the campaign, and help players to feel that there really is a world going on around them.

The second booklet contains a collection of new critical hit charts, fumble charts (as printed in Apocrypha Now) and new critical hit rules. Graeme Davis (an original WFRP author) has written much of this, and his influence pervades the whole. The new Critical hit rules are only slightly amended from the rulebook, but are much clearer and more detailed. This leads onto the new critical hit tables, which now cover the range of methods that can be used to hurt characters, from being hit with an arrow to falling off a building. These are all nicely descriptive, but more importantly well balanced, and although they may add an extra (very minor) layer of rules to the game, are well worth using. The Energy Critical table originally appeared in issue two of Warpstone but it has been toned down here into a more playable form.

Both these booklets are excellent aids. My only criticism is that they are printed without any sort of cover and the paper does not seem overly durable. When you consider they are designed for constant reference during play, with players and GM handing them around, this is a little short-sighted. Perhaps the two booklets would have been better as one book with a card cover. However, this is a fairly minor complaint, and putting them

in a folder should help them survive the rigours of the gaming table (spilt coke, pizza etc.).

If you like using GMs' screens, then this is certainly a worthwhile purchase. If you don't use them, though, you may well want to think about how much you're likely to use the reference material before rushing out to buy it.

Unofficial Appendum: The GM's Screen & Reference Pack

The reference pack contains new critical charts for use with various weapons. Although it will be obvious in the vast majority of cases which weapon matches what critical table, the following list summarises this. Some weapons have been grouped (different kinds of axes, swords, etc.) into a single category.

Weapon Critical Hits Table	
Axes	Sharp weapons
Bolas	Blunt weapons 1
Bows	Arrows and bolts
Buckler	Blunt or sharp weapons 2
Club	Blunt weapons
Cutlass	Sharp weapons
Dagger	Sharp weapons
Dart	Arrows and bolts
Flail	Blunt weapons
Garrotte	Sudden death table
Halberd	Sharp weapons
Javelin	Arrows and bolts
Knuckle Duster	Blunt weapons
Lance	Sharp weapons
Mace	Blunt weapons
Morning Star	Blunt weapons
Net	Blunt weapons 3
Quarter Staff	Blunt weapons
Rapier	Arrows and bolts 4
Spear	Sharp weapons 5
Sling	Arrows and bolts
Sword	Sharp weapons
Sword Breaker	Sharp weapons
Warhammer	Blunt weapons
Whip	Sharp weapons
<i>Notes:</i>	
1 - I have ignored the wire damage here. However you may decide that on a head critical, the sudden death table applies (i.e. it wraps around the throat).	
2 - When acquired it should be decided whether it is spiked or not.	
3 - However I would argue that it should give no critical if the attempt it to entangle. Otherwise its weighted edges cause "Blunt weapons critical".	
4 - As rapiers do not have a sharp edge I think this table is more suitable.	
5 - Optionally you could use "Arrows and bolts".	

