

WARPSTONE

The independent magazine for Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay



RECOMMENDED

LA REINE MARGOT

(Dir: Patrice Chereau, France 1995)

Recommended by John Foody

La Reine Margot (The Queen Margot) concerns events leading up to and resulting from the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre of 1572, where the Huguenots (French Protestants) were killed by rampaging Roman Catholics in the streets of Paris. Although this is central point of the film the main story concerns Margot and her political marriage and the subsequent intrigues in the French court. The film stars Isabelle Adjani, Daniel Auteuil and Jean-Hughes Anglade and is subtitled.

For GM's looking to run a campaign based in Royal Courts this gives excellent ideas for subterfuge and intrigue not to mention plenty of scope for Noble NPC's. Everyone is a pawn in someone else's game and Death is a viable option. Should also give fresh ideas on blood feuds and religious bigotry. Players with Noble characters may also find a few hints on playing their blue blooded alter ego's.

RAN

(Dir. Akira Kurosawa, 1985)

Recommended by John Foody

Kurosawa's reworking of King Lear. starring Tatsuya Nakadai, Akira Terao and Mieko Harada among a cast of thousands. When a powerful Warlord carves up his kingdom between his two eldest sons leaving nothing to the youngest and most loyal. With the manipulations of Lady Kaede the kingdom falls into chaos (Ran). There follows a civil war on a grand scale with some of the greatest battle scenes on film (how many bodyguards?) some of which can only be described as colour co-ordinated.

Indeed all of Kurosawa's films come highly recommended and not just by me. The hidden Fortress was the inspiration behind Star Wars, while The Seven Samurai and Yojimbo were remade as The Magnificent Seven and A Fistful of Dollars.

Both of these films can offer a good scenario idea although they may well be overly familiar. Ran gives plenty of pointers for using subterfuge and Intrigue as well as well as showing some of the flows of how wars can be staged within a game. At the very least it may give some help for running noble NPC's.

Tales of Mystery and Imagination by Edgar Allan Poe **Recommended by Martin Oliver**

(Price varies from 99p for a cut-down collection in bargain bookshops to £100+ for an illustrated antiquarian edition)

This collection of short stories covers a whole plethora of plot ideas. There are detective stories with unexpected twists (Murders in the Rue Morgue), accounts of introverted nobles in Gothic castles (Fall of the House of Usher), traveller's tales (A Descent into the Maelstrom), supernatural plagues (Masque of the Red Death), doppelgangers (William Wilson), demons (Silence - a Fable), alternative necromancy (The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar), and the terrors of being buried alive (The Premature Burial). What can't be purloined as a plot could well be brought in as a rumour on a journey or a story in a tavern. The quality of the tales varies considerably, but even where the atmosphere falters there are some excellent ideas to be found.

If possible, try and get hold of an edition with Harry Clarke's illustrations. These are wonderfully atmospheric, and could make excellent handouts. Also recommended would be any good biography of the author. His stories may seem gothic and bizarre, but for him, truth really was stranger than fiction.

Dracula by Bram Stoker **Recommended by Martin Oliver**

This is the vampire story, recounting in the form of journals and letters the horrors which ensue when a certain Transylvanian count decides to visit England. It's a real gothic classic. The prolonged, deeply felt struggle for Lucy's life, together with the painful choices which have to be made after her death, are an excellent example of how horror can be made tragic and effective. Renfield, the "zoophageous" (life eating) mental patient, is a great example of insanity at work. Many plots could come from the persistent, invasive and subtle workings of the Count. In all, not only does this make for a good read, it's also a font of good ideas for bringing those horror-based scenarios to life. Or at least, to Undeath...

Anno Dracula by Kim Newman **Recommended by John Foody**

What would have happened if Dracula had survived the events in Bram Stoker's novel? This is the question that Kim Newman sets out to answer and what could have been a complete failure ends up as something quite brilliant and perverse. This is a book that shows no respect for anything.

Many of you may be familiar with Kim Newman's Warhammer novels (as Jack Yeovil) and indeed Genevieve the Vampire turns up here. Newman has also written a number of other novels including a sequel to Anno Dracula.

So what did happen to the Blood-sucking count. Quite obvious really when you think about it - He goes to London and marries Queen Victoria. Eh! Together they begin a reign of terror, throwing dissidents into concentration camps and generally behaving badly.

The novel is obviously written very tongue in cheek and with great energy and style. A multitude of characters (both real and fictional) are thrown into the mix. For WFRP GM's it shows how a mixture of styles can be made to work and there's even a secret society. It shows how far you can push a concept and still not completely lose it.

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley
Recommended by Kathy Baker

Mary Shelley's classic novel tells the story of Victor Frankenstein, a young science student who becomes obsessed with the idea of creating life and, using the bodies of the dead, builds a man...

Predictably, when a human takes on himself the mantle of a God, disaster must follow. The instant Frankenstein's creature comes to life, Frankenstein is overcome with horror at the thing he has created. The story turns into an all-consuming pursuit, during which the monster, desperately unhappy because of his rejection by mankind (and his abandonment by his maker) systematically murders Frankenstein's family.

Read it for: Pursuitthe obsessive, desperate, all-consuming chase; what it feels like to be both the hunter and the hunted. The mutant's viewfeared, despised and rejected simply because of his appearance, it is Frankenstein's monster that you really sympathise with. (Worth remembering next time you go hunting chaos mutants!)

The Terminator and Alien
Recommended by Martin Oliver

It's like nothing you've even dreamed of. It's faster, tougher, and more versatile than you are. It's unstoppable. And it's coming to get you.

With both of these films, it's the atmosphere that really makes them memorable; both plots are really rather straightforward. With these, it's this atmosphere that should be borrowed. Yes, it's tense when you watch it happen to some character on the screen, but take those same elements and target them on a player, and everything becomes that much more intense. Real horror is not being able to look over your shoulder because you know that something is catching up with you.

Watchmen by Alan Moore & Dave Gibbons; &
Batman: The Dark Knight Returns by Miller, Janson & Varley
Recommended by John Foody

Two of the leading comic books (each available in a collected edition) that formed part of the genre's mid eighties renaissance. Both dealt with superheroes, new ones in the case of Watchmen, while The Dark Knight Returns starts with a retired Batman. Each book is brilliantly written and atmospherically drawn.

Moore's Watchmen is based in a self-contained world, similar to our own, but forever changed by the presence of an invincible superbeing. The plot starts with the murder of one of the superheroes (or 'masks') and the uncovering of a mask killer. What makes Watchmen so special is the pure attention to detail and the excellent characters. It is a book that bears numerous rereads.

Frank Miller's TDKR is the work that reinvented Batman, making him far darker and intense than previously. All the standard characters are here but their glory days are behind them, with Bruce Wayne retired for ten years. The book is really a swansong for Batman, imagining what would happen at the end.

Both titles make their heroes into humans, and sometimes anti-heroes. While they fight crime, each character has (sometimes odd) reasons for doing so. Many are indistinguishable from the criminals they fight. Very little is black and white in these

stories.

These books were both released in the mid-eighties at the same time as WFRP and it is interesting to see the similarity in the way both treat their heroes. No longer were the worlds roamed by clean cut all-American superheroes/shining paladins but something more three dimensional. Part of this change was that things became darker. Although writers had done this before, it was at this point that these ideas began to move into the mainstream. Now anti-heroes are the norm.

Also highly recommended is V for Vendetta by Alan Moore and David Lloyd, and Batman: The Killing Joke again by Moore (with Brian Bolland and John Higgins).

Flesh and Blood (Paul Verhoven 1985)

Recommended by Zeno Collins

Starring Rutger Hauer (not a sane man!) and Jennifer Jason Leigh. Central Europe (probably Italy/Austria) 1501, a greedy noble betrays and refuses to pay his mercenaries after they've just captured a city for him. A half dozen mercenaries and their camp followers, led by Hauer, kidnap the fiancé of the noble's son in revenge.

The film contains extremely bloody and realistic treatment of medieval warfare, very good costumes and weapons from the period WFRP is set in. There are good characters, mainly played by unknown actors, but all portrayed very well. Ronald Lacey's fanatic priest is brilliant and not a man you want to be stuck in a castle with. The use of a plague infected dog (suitably diced) and a well is particularly gruesome but realistic. It shows what battles, warfare and sieges in the WFRP setting might be like. A very good film to give the feel for WFRP.