

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons[®]

Player's Handbook 2nd Edition Rules Supplement

The Complete Bard's Handbook

by Blake Mobley



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Sample file

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In every era and every region throughout the world, traveling musicians wandered throughout the land. They moved from town to town, making a living by plying their trade as artists of sound and motion. In the AD&D® game, adventurers who do this are called *bards*.

Historically, bards were the poet-musicians of the Celtic peoples living in the British Isles (the Irish, Welsh, and Scots). Bards composed music, sang songs, and entertained their masters. Usually they worked for noblemen and spent their time honoring these noblemen and their families in song and music. Bards often accompanied their songs on the *crwth*, a type of lyre. Since their music wasn't written down, most of it has vanished.

During the early Middle Ages, bards had considerable political power and influence in the royal houses. However, in 1284 A.D., Edward I conquered Wales; the resulting turmoil reduced the importance of bards. Noblemen had more pressing concerns, and bards were left to fend for themselves. A few lingered on, into the 17th and 18th centuries, in Ireland and Scotland as folk singers and musicians, but they eventually vanished along with their music.

During the 19th century, a determined effort was made to revive the bardic tradition. Folk music gatherings took place in and near Wales. These neo-bardic activities caught on among the public, and today the annual Eisteddfod folk festival is a popular and growing event in this region of the world.

Thus, bards have shown a cunning knack to survive through the ages. In one form or another, bards have been around for nearly 1,000 years. Besides the Eisteddfod festival, the bard has been immortalized in the genre of fantasy. Now you have a chance to continue the bardic tradition. This book covers not only the traditional bard, but expands the class with new and unique character kits. All of these kits involve some form of live entertainment, as all bards are entertainers at heart.

Nearly half of these kits entertain through music in one form or another: poetry, song, instruments, etc. But some present such diverse new kits as the Blade, who entertains through creative weapon displays, knife throwing, and sword swallowing. Read on and enjoy.

Optional Rules

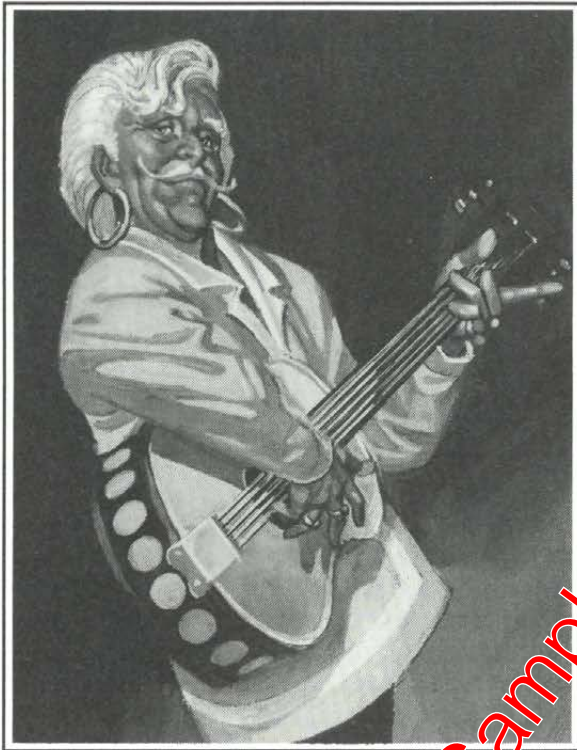
Within this book are many new rules, bard kits, suggestions on role-playing, details of instruments, and new proficiencies. This information adds to the rules presented in the *Player's Handbook*.

It is important to note that this book is a supplement to the *Player's Handbook*. All of the rules presented here are optional. As a player, you must have your Dungeon Master's consent before using any of these new rules.

The Complete Bard's Handbook is a book of supplemental rules for adding depth, spice, and life to the bard character class. However, even if your Dungeon Master should decide that none of the rules within this book can be used in his campaign, you can still gain a lot by reading the pages that follow. Most of the important tables from the *Player's Handbook* (e.g., level advancement, bard abilities, etc.) are compressed into one convenient section within this book. It is also possible to mimic most of the new bard kits within the existing bard class. This book answers many questions about bardic abilities and presents an extensive list of instruments available to medieval bards, along with illustrations. And, finally, this book has a lot of good information to help gamers to better role-play their bard characters.

The Other Complete Books

The Complete Bard's Handbook is the sixth book of the PHBR series. If you find this book useful in your gaming, you may want to look into the other PHBRs.



of which could be adopted by bard characters. Since some bards are adept with numerous weapons, the section on combat rules applies to certain bards (particularly the expanded weapon proficiency rules, which allow a character to learn multiple weapons while expending only a few proficiency slots). Fighting styles, martial arts, and other odd combat rules are also presented here. Even jousting tournaments are covered (ideal for the Gallant kit). Within the "Equipment" section is a sizable collection of new weapons, new armor, and new magical items.

The Complete Thief's Handbook: As you might expect, this handbook has a great deal of useful information for the bard class. Within it are more useful rules than can be listed here. However, general topics you may find helpful include the following: role-playing thieves, new proficiencies, guilds (construction, maintenance, and types), thief tools, thief equipment, new magical items, classic cons (especially good for the Charlatan), new thief rules, and a description of the thief-based campaign.

The Complete Priest's Handbook: There is little information in this handbook that is pertinent to the bard character class.

The Complete Wizard's Handbook: Chapter 4 discusses campaign worlds with varying levels of magic. Chapter 5 covers wizards and combat. Chapter 6 describes spell casting under water, spell functioning on various planes, and impaired casting. Chapter 7 presents a commentary on new applications for old spells, adjudicating illusions, spell research, and magical item research. Chapter 8 gives all-new spells ranging from 1st to 8th level. Finally, Chapter 9 contains a number of useful wizardly lists.

The Complete Psionics Handbook: There are two useful elements within this book. Most important are the wild talents in Chapter 1. It is possible for a bard to have a few wild psionic talents (the process for determining this is given in Chapter 1). If a wild talent

Table 1: THE COMPLETE PHBR LINE

Designator	Topic	Stock #
PHBR1	Fighter's	2110
PHBR2	Thief's	2111
PHBR3	Priest's	2113
PHBR4	Wizard's	2115
PHBR5	Psionics	2117
PHBR6	Bard's	2127

All of these books contain much information that can enhance your bard. Some of the more useful information is listed below.

The Complete Fighter's Handbook: The "Character Creation" section provides an in-depth look into the armor proficiency. Those bard kits able to wear non-standard armor will find this topic particularly interesting. Weapon quality and its effects on combat are also discussed. The "Role-Playing" section provides a list of warrior personalities, some