

Issue #8

Q-4 2024

# MAD SCRIBE

MAGAZINE



An Interview with Rob Kuntz - The Road to Hell  
Chasing a Unicorn - After the Bomb Comic by Phil Cold  
Q-4 Boardgame Reviews - Domain Play by RPGPundit  
Understanding & Designing Factions - The Hero's Journey  
Dustin Tucker Cosplay - Frostgrave Battle Report  
Hilda Finds A Home (series end!)

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inside 

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*Available only at Giant Slayer Games*

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There is no direct subscription process available, but Patreon subscribers receive a substantial discount off the retail price of the magazine (Patrons are responsible for basic printing & shipping costs). Discounted print orders of each issue via Patreon are fulfilled by Drivethrurpg.com by way of patron specific discount codes.

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# A WORD FROM THE EDITOR



As we approach the 2024 American elections, it's impossible to ignore the importance of standing up for our values. The choices we make now will echo far beyond the ballot box, shaping the future of our country for generations. In many ways, this mirrors the world of tabletop gaming, where the decisions of the few influence the experience of the many. Just as we demand accountability from our leaders, so too should we demand it from the industries we love.

Speaking of accountability, this issue also shines a light on the corporate corruption plaguing the tabletop gaming industry. In recent years, we've seen beloved franchises hollowed out by greed, with companies repackaging old material under the guise of "modern updates" to maximize profits. The heart of role-playing games—the spirit of creativity, camaraderie, and adventure—has been too often sacrificed at the altar of corporate interests.

Despite this, there are beacons of hope. We are thrilled to include in this issue an exclusive interview with Rob Kuntz, one of the original pioneers of role-playing games. Rob's insights into the early days of the hobby remind us of the magic that once was—and can be again if we stay true to our roots. Mad Scribe is committed to emulating the golden era of tabletop RPGs, when the focus was on storytelling and innovation, not merely corporate gain.

We leave you with this thought: "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts." Let this issue inspire you to stand firm, whether you're casting your vote or crafting your next campaign. Stay determined, even when it's unpopular. After all, it's the rebels and dreamers who change the world.

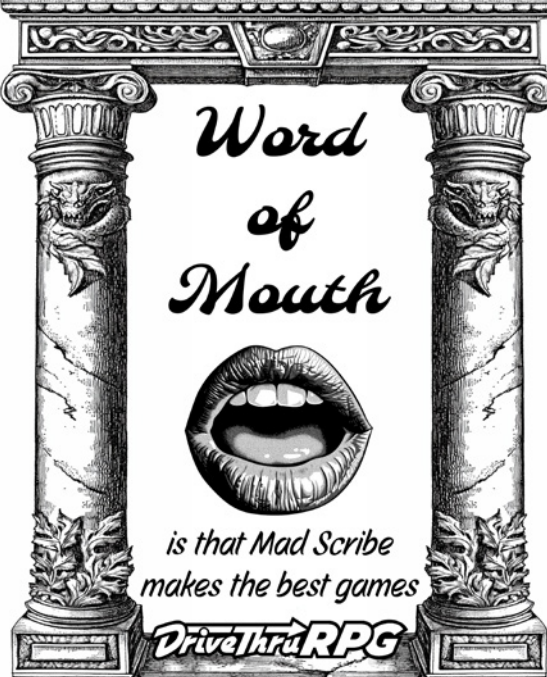
— Chris Miller (aka: the Mad Scribe)

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## Word of Mouth



is that Mad Scribe makes the best games





# AN INTERVIEW WITH GAMING LEGEND:

# ROB KUNTZ

INTERVIEWS

**Please start off by introducing yourself: Who are you, how old are you, and where are you from originally?**

I am a player's worst nightmare, a DM's best friend, and a designer/writer/game and play theorist. I have been active since the beginning of RPGs in 1973 when we play-tested what would become D&D. I'm 69 years of age and was born and raised in my hometown of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. I've won several prestigious awards and have published way more than I can now recall. I'm still very active in the RPG industry and adjacent industries. But I don't do windows...

**How did you first get into tabletop gaming?**

I started playing board games like Stratego, Battle Cry, checkers, card games, and others during my childhood.

**How/when did you first meet Gary Gygax?**



I met Gary serendipitously in September/October 1968 at 13 years of age. Probably a one in a million chance that all of the circumstances would align for me to do so. It has to do with the accumulative circumstances of my mother having a nervous breakdown, my Aunt and neighbors watching me during her hospitalization, me wanting a game (Dog Fight) that I had recently noted in a Playboy magazine, my Aunt taking me to find it for a birthday present, meeting a store manager who only had Avalon Hill games instead and who played them with Gary Gygax, and my Aunt agreeing for me to accept his phone number and an invitation to play these games at Gary's house, which I did about 10 days later—3 blocks away straight line walk out of my residence. I lived at the corner of Wisconsin and Madison streets, and Gary was at the corner of Wisconsin and Center.



**I understand that you were a player in Dave Arneson's first session of Blackmoor; what was that like? Can you give us a brief synopsis of the campaign?**

I'm going to throw a HUGE amount of starch on these questions to straighten them out. Only the "Blackmoor Bunch" gamers played first in Dave's campaign, and for about 1.5 years as he created the forerunner to D&D, Blackmoor, the first non-commercial RPG as we now know it today. Then, wanting to demo it, he unveiled his breakout game system to Gary, myself, my brother Terry, and Ernie Gygax in November of 1972. I wrote about that in Wargaming magazine #1 in 1977, and then many years ago, I published "The Game That Changed Everything," wherein I detail our first time playing in Blackmoor and its aftermath. The Fellowship of the Thing (Chris Graves & Morgan Griffith) produced a superb documentary on those days, "Secrets of Blackmoor," which reveals the history leading up to that demo game in 1972.

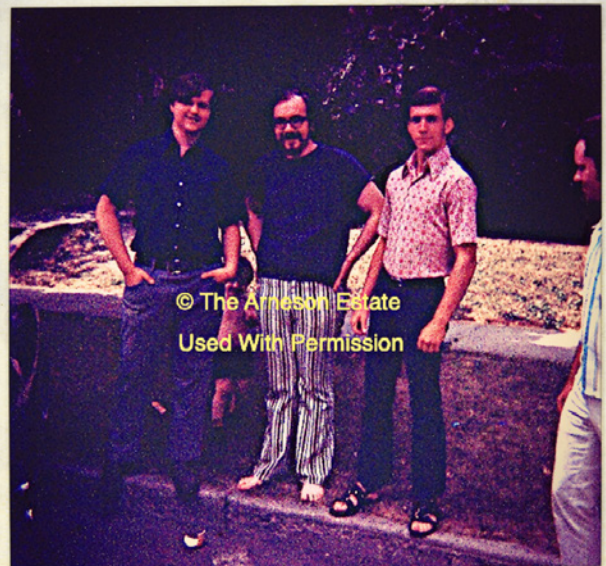
**Please tell us about: "Castle El Raja Key."**

It is my castle/dungeon, created 3 weeks after Gary created Castle Greyhawk 1. I have two versions of it, just as there are two versions of Castle Greyhawk. So: Castle Greyhawk 1 (December 1972, Gary); Castle El Raja Key 1 (January of 1973, Rob); Castle Greyhawk 2 (December of 1973, continuous, Gygax & Kuntz); Castle El Raja Key 2 (mid-1974 onward, Kuntz). It was initially crafted to help play-test the D&D game and to give Gary an opportunity to play and experience that side of the game (for holistic designer perspectives) and also for me to dive into DMing/design. This led to Gary and me creating Castle Greyhawk 2 by merging our campaigns. Its name incorporates my initials, RJK (Robert Jerry Kuntz), so 'RJK's Castle.'

**When did you start working at TSR? And what was that experience like?**

You might say I helped build up to TSR by being the president of the LGTSA (Lake Geneva Tactical Studies Association), King of the Castle & Crusades Society (and the last editor of its newsletters, the "Do-

mesday Book"), play-testing all sorts of Gary's designs and investing time and lots of money in miniatures for different periods of play related to that. Gary & I also collected the only elastolin figures used to play-test Chainmail. Then there were the play-tests of D&D and related. When Don Kaye died in January of 1975, I was brought in a few months later to handle shipping as his wife didn't want any further involvement with the company. By that time, Gary & I had published the Greyhawk supplement to D&D (or were about to). Brian Blume and I would take care of the orders from Gary's basement, and then when my brother had finished renovating the Marshall Street location, we moved shipping to that location along with all of the other offices. Until then we were pretty much working from our homes. I also moved into the Chairman position for GenCon 8 around that time. I am the youngest Chairman in GENCON's history, starting at 19 years of age and running both 8 & 9 and Winter Fantasy 1.



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Rob , Gary and Terry



**Gygax credits you with providing “substantial ideas” to the adventure: Expedition to the Barrier Peaks (1980). What contributions did you make?**

I created most, if not all, of the tech aspects of it, the robots, weapons, etc. It was first run in its tournament form at Origins 2 and my group there had 18 players.

**Who was “Robilar”? And can you recall any of his more noteworthy adventures/accomplishments?**

I cover a very large segment of the real Robilar’s history in “The Return of Robilar,” and it’s very comprehensive. His name derives from Gary’s send-up to me in his novel “The Gnome Cache,” wherein Dunstan, the protagonist, is questioned by Baron Robilar to find and return the fabled gnome treasure. I sat on Gary’s day bed in his study as he wrote the novel, and he would hand me each typed page to read as he did so.

Robilar is best described by his history of solo adventures (recounted in The Return of Robilar) into Castle Greyhawk 1 and beating Gary’s designs. Excerpt:

*“In my final estimation Robilar (1972-1977) upheld the ideals of Conan. He crept through the crypts, chose his fights intelligently, and always emerged victorious. However, Conan had Robert E. Howard, the author; behind him with a skillfully wielded pen, whereas I had Gary Gygax, the DM/Designer, in front of me with a purposely sharpened knife...”*

**Why did you leave TSR in 1977? And did you later return?**

People started to change, and I decided to pursue freelance work because of that. I was also getting too overburdened by doing shipping, doing the conventions, answering D&D mailed-in questions, writing articles, and then having to do design work at home when I was quite literally exhausted for the day. I wanted out of shipping and to fully concentrate on design and the conventions (Gencon & Winter Fantasy); and just as Arneson was refused that, so was I. I never returned, although I was offered a job back at TSR



in 1980, which I thanked them for but declined. Then, in 1985, when Gary (after briefly taking over the company) asked me to return to brand manage the World of Greyhawk line of products, I agreed. But he lost the company, and it never came about.

**You designed a two-part tournament adventure based on an adventure you ran in college called: “The Maze of Xaene,” set in Greyhawk, but TSR never published the adventure. Were you ever able to publish it yourself, and if so, can readers still purchase it?**

It was expanded to 4 parts and published by my company, Creations Unlimited, in 1987. You can still pick up the set from Noble Knight Games. Three Line Studio will eventually edit these and publish them as a single book, but not this year, at least.

**What is your favorite D&D class?**

Fighter. Straight forward and dangerous.

