Michael Moorcock's

Elric of Melnibone

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Introduction

For ten thousand years the Bright Empire of Melniboné has ruled the Earth, the shadow of its Dragon Lords reaching far and wide. From the icy fjords of Tarkesh to the Boiling Sea and sands of Dorel; from the Marshes of the Mists and the forests of Jharkor to the Ragged Pillars separating the empire from the unknown, unmapped East; across the oceans to take in the Isle of the Purple Towns, Pan Tang and the mist-shrouded Sorcerers' Isle. Melniboné, greatest of empires, has reached that point all empires inevitably reach, when decadence overtakes sense, and the corrupting influence of power undermines confidence and control.

This is the time of the Young Kingdoms. This is the beginning of the End of the World.

A storm approaches. Its architect is Elric, last emperor of Melniboné. An albino Prince of Ruins: a weakling and a mighty sorcerer, a poet, a lover, a kin-slayer and a pawn of the Lords of Law and Chaos. The agents of the world's destruction are the capricious Dukes of Hell and a sinister, sentient runesword forged to destroy a race of gods, but destined to destroy this cycle of time and herald the start of new empires, though none will ever come close to the majesty or influence of fading Melniboné.

Yet, despite the cataclysm, this is a time of adventure, intrigue and romance. Against the backdrop of Melniboné's decline, new nations are emerging and seizing control of its fragmenting empire. This is the time of men and, whilst brief, it is no less bright than the Empire of Melniboné, and as the Earth approaches its darkest hours, humankind can, and will, make a difference.

This book describes the world of Elric of Melniboné and the Young Kingdoms. It details its lands, its peoples, its possibilities and its doom. It offers an insight into the schemes of the Lords of Law and Chaos and provides Games Masters and players with the tools to adventure alongside Elric, Moonglum, Rackhir and Myshella. Adventurers can aid, thwart or ignore the grand designs of the Lords of the Million Spheres and can carve for themselves quests, legends and even their own empires.

This is the time of the Young Kingdoms. This is the beginning of adventures at the End of the World.

Dancing at the End of Time

The spotlight in the world is firmly on Elric, as noted in both Michael Moorcock's stories. That is to be expected from the works based on Elric's life, but there is still room for Games Masters and individual characters to make a difference. That is where this book comes in.

Elric's saga spans ten or so years of Young Kingdoms history, from the time Elric leaves Imrryr to travel for a year, through his many years of wandering the world and other planes, culminating in the final battle that reshapes the Young Kingdoms. This book describes this decade, referring to events in the recent past, those occurring, and in the near future. Elric is abroad in the world, Theleb K'aarna hatches his schemes against the southern continent, Myshella and Tanelorn, and the Sea Lords gather to plan the razing of Imrryr. So the default setting for this game is during the time of Elric, but no precise date or period is given. Games Masters may choose any point in the ten years of the saga, using the momentous events Elric causes, as either a backdrop to their campaigns, or to include the adventurers in them. There is still time for many adventures in the years before Elric wields Stormbringer in the great battle against Chaos. Although the fate of the Earth is set by the stories not everything is set in stone. Characters can still trek across the Weeping Waste, heavy blades held in tired hands as they keep alert for signs of bandit ambush; or stalk through the forests of Jharkor, ever-aware that they are being preyed upon by otherworldly monsters.

Some Games Masters will lead their players through the intrigue-laden, cold-hearted court of Imrryr the Dreaming City – plotting, scheming and duelling their way to both glory and infamy while their empire dies around them. Other characters may find themselves clutching axes as they sail to the Dragon Isle, ready to topple the towers of the Dreaming City and slaughter the inhuman race that lives there. The Seventh Dark chapter,

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Elric is one of *the* icons of fantasy fiction, his story spanning over forty years of superb writing, including short stories, novels, comics, music and the spoken word. Familiarity with Michael Moorcock's Elric milieu is presumed, but, for a condensed overview of this fine body of work, see *Synopsis of the Elric Saga* beginning on page 135.

beginning on page 126, provides some additional ideas on placing campaigns before Elric's birth; either at the Bright Empire's height, during the war with the Dharzi, or in the aftermath of that war at the very start of the time of the Young Kingdoms.

What Is In This Book?

Elric of Melniboné deals with the world of Michael Moorcock's infamous character, the albino sorcerer-swordsman Elric. This book presents Games Masters and players with all they need in order to create and run adventurers set in the Young Kingdoms.

Elric of Melniboné contains the following chapters.

The Young Kingdoms

An introduction to the world and each of the major nations, powers and races in the Young Kingdoms at the time of Elric, including Melniboné and Pan Tang.

Character Creation

Creating a Young Kingdoms adventurer; full rules and guidance on generating characters for *Elric of Melniboné* games, using the *RuneQuest* engine.

Skills

Full rules for utilising and developing skills in the Young Kingdoms.

Equipment

Detailing currency, weapons, armour and adventuring gear required for survival in the world of Elric.

Combat

Full rules for melee and ranged combat.

Adventuring

Details movement, fatigue, healing and other necessary aspects of adventuring in the Young Kingdoms.

Lords of the Million Spheres

Cults and religions found in Elric's time.

The Silver Grimoire

A detailed examination of magic in the Young Kingdoms, including rules and guidance for allegiance with a particular cosmic power and treading the Moonbeam Roads.

The Seventh Dark

A section for Games Masters, offering notes and advice on running *Elric of Melniboné* campaigns, including an overview of the Elric saga.

Creatures

A Young Kingdoms bestiary and guide to the demons and supernatural beings of the Elric saga.

Heroes & Villains

Descriptions and statistics for the key players in the Elric saga.

About Michael Moorcock

There are few living authors as prolific as Michael Moorcock. Born in 1939, he published his first novel in 1961. Throughout the 1960s and 70s he was the editor of the hugely influential *New Worlds* magazine, which actively championed ground-breaking fantasy and imaginative fiction. Michael's Jerry Cornelius novel *The*

What is Needed Besides this Book?

Elric of Melniboné uses the *RuneQuest* game engine but is otherwise self-contained. The *RuneQuest Companion* and *RuneQuest Monsters* may prove to be of use although they are not essential to getting the most from this book.

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Condition of Muzak, won the 1977 Guardian Fiction prize, and he has been accorded no less than three 'Lifetime Achievement' awards. In 2002 Michael was inducted into the Science Fiction and Fantasy Hall of Fame.



Elric is his most famous and enduring creation. The albino began life as a reaction to both the brawny heroes of Sword and Sorcery fantasy and the detailed epics of JRR Tolkien. Michael reversed the traditional clichés, questioned the role and nature of the 'hero', and delved into the psychology of his most famous character in ways unseen in fantasy literature. Despite killing Elric at the end of only the second book concerning the albino's exploits ('*Stormbringer*'), he continued to revisit the saga over the course of the next forty years, adding to it, enriching it, and delving deeper into philosophical ideas concerning love, betrayal, and the meaning of existence. Elric is, as a result, one of the most detailed and best-drawn fantasy characters ever created. As the Elric stories have progressed, Michael has explored the roles of myth and their interpretation, creating an even deeper body of work that continues to provoke and astound in equal measure.

Michael has never confined himself to one medium. Elric has been the subject of music, poetry and graphic novels (Elric: The Making of a Sorcerer being the most recent exploration of the saga). Michael is highly respected as a writer, editor, thinker, and chronicler of the fantastic. He has never shirked from tackling controversial themes in his work and remains as active, and as influential, as ever. The shelves of book stores might groan under the weight of epic fantasy trilogies, each penned by a succession of 'new masters of the genre'. But Moorcock was there first: but for his efforts, those shelves would have more meagre offerings.

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The Young Kingdoms

There came a time when there was great movement upon the Earth and above it, when the destiny of Men and Gods was hammered out upon the forge of Fate, when monstrous wars were brewed and mighty deeds were designed. And there rose up in this time, which was called the Age of the Young Kingdoms, heroes. Greatest of these heroes was a doom-driven adventurer who bore a crooning rune blade that he loathed.
– Stormbringer

Prehistory and the Birth of Melniboné

The Young Kingdoms predate our own world. When Elric blows the Horn of Fate he signals the end of his time and the beginning of ours; time begins anew.

This is not, however, the first such cataclysm. A full cycle of time has passed already, although little is known of it. What Melniboné's scholars do know is that the world was created by the Lords of Chaos and with it all life. The first sapient life was a race known as The Doomed Folk and they grew to hate their world with such intensity that they brought about their own destruction.

In the new world that arose from the ashes of the Doomed Folk, several non-human races established themselves. These included the Older Ones, worshippers of the Lords of Law and now long forgotten; the winged people of Myyrrhn, the civilised descendents of the ape-like clakars; and, in the Silent Lands, a strange inhuman race that were distant relatives of the Myyrrhn. The Elemental Rulers: Grome, Straasha, Lassa and Kakatal, vied for power and inevitably came into violent conflict. Twenty thousand years ago the world was reshaped again, this time into the continents of the Young Kingdoms, when Grome and Straasha battled for supremacy over land and sea. The imposing geographical features of the world, such as The Ragged Pillars and the Roaring Rocks, are the result of this supernatural struggle and not plate tectonics.

Then appeared the race that would come to be Melniboné: the Mernii. Their true origins are unclear, even to Melniboné's own scholars. Some claim that the Melnibonéans were Nomads of the Time Streams whilst others argue that they were natives of the Earth and interbred with the Older Ones. Certainly Melniboné's first seat of civilisation was not the island of Melniboné but the city of R'lin K'ren A'a, now hidden in the jungles beyond the Boiling Sea. When a race known as the Dead Gods sought to challenge the Older Ones, the Older Ones responded by forging the twin runeswords Stormbringer and Mournblade to slay their enemies. The war between the Older Ones and the Dead Gods resulted in the destruction of both races, and the Mernii inherited the world.

At this time the Mernii were allied with the Cosmic Balance and they left R'lin K'ren A'a and settled on the series of islands that became Melniboné. But the sinister powers of the Lords of Chaos seduced certain Mernii, showing them how, through Chaos and sorcery, they could surpass any of the races that had ruled the world before. A vicious civil war erupted with the Balance-aligned Mernii fleeing the dreadful, Chaos-fuelled destruction of their city, H'hui'shan. The Chaos-worshippers who remained inherited the title of Melniboné. They learned to tame the great dragons of their island and built new cities, first and foremost dreaming Imrryr. The Dragon Lords, bearing Stormbringer and Mournblade, conquered the rest of the world swiftly and mercilessly, revelling in their power and new-found cruelty.

The Bright Empire was born.

Upstart Nations and New Oppressors

Melniboné ruled the world for 10,000 years. It did so through a mixture of fear, sorcery and economic might. Melniboné considers humans as an irrelevance; pathetic and uncultured barbarians fit only to be used as slaves or, at best, treated as harmless pets. Melniboné ruled alone, although the smaller,

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