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Gardásiyal

Your humble editor gives his uncompromising opinion on the long-awaited new role-playing rules for Tékumel

It was a grey April morning when I went to collect the long-awaited Gardásiyal rules. I drove through the world’s second-worst one-way system to a grim South London Industrial estate —the Post Office have some strange ideas about delivery and customer service these days. I signed for the air-mail packet and raced home. I ripped open the packet and pulled out a brightly coloured box. The long wait was finally over.

I looked at the cover. Nice artwork: allies against the Hokun. I read the back cover: *Tékumel...fifty years...What you hold is a complete, complex, alien and thoroughly enjoyable fantasy world.* It sounded good so far.

I opened the box. Four dice rolled out. The sofa will be pleased. It hasn’t eaten in ages. Next, I pulled out a glorious, full-coloured map. Forests and mountains; sakbe roads stand out boldly. It’s a distinct improvement on the previous ones, at least in appearance, but what about the hex grid? How will I find the Mihalli ruins in hex 2723 of map 4? Still, it could be worse.

I grabbed the first of the three rulebooks. I was surprised by its lightness. I know air-mail is expensive but this was taking things too far. I kept expecting to see perforations halfway down each page. The artwork looked good, the first decent artwork for Tékumel rules that I’ve seen for a while. The layout, too, was good with a big typeface for those ageing peepers. Yes, this definitely looked promising.

I flipped book one open and looked for the contents page. Hmmm...must be some oversight here...can’t find it. Still, that’s not a major problem. I began reading: *“Players who wish to generate their own HUMAN characters are referred to the ADVENTURES ON TEKUEML series.”* Bloody cheapskates! It clearly says on the back of the box that this is a **complete** fantasy world! Does the word have a different meaning in the US? I think not! I think I am expected to fork out another 80 bucks on top of the 60 I’ve already spent for the rest of the “complete” rules. Only the British have a phrase which can adequately sum up my reaction—*bollocks to that!*

I decided to see what I actually had got for my \$60. I flicked through the pages and saw page after page of familiar looking tables. I knew the new combat system was based on Swords and Glory. I didn’t realise how close the resemblance was. Did I find any new content at all in volume one? Well, there was this section called the Quick Play System. It seemed to be a way to resolve combats if you find the main system too slow....hang on! That’s a tacit admission that the main system doesn’t work! So why is it in there in the first place? Arghhh! I dropped book one in disgust.

Nervously, I picked up ~~book one~~ book two, the spells and sorcery guide. It had the same flimsy paper, the same nice artwork, the same lack of anything new over Swords and Glory. Total time to evaluate: 30 seconds.

I turned to book three, the referees guide. This seemed to contain something new at least, though it’s difficult to tell without a list of contents, you know like any cheap word-processor will do automatically. Yes, the lists of Eyes and Books and Magic Items aren’t new but they are essential to the game, I suppose. The descriptions of encounters is pretty standard stuff. The section on scenarios is, well, *short*.

I turned to look for book four, the one that must contain the fifty years of imagination and flair, fifty years of exotic lands and forgotten cities, fifty years of intrigues and betrayals, fifty years of wonder and mystery, fifty years of Wait a minute! This wasn’t the sourcebook! This was some pictures of NPCs! There is no sourcebook in the box! Incredible! How could they have the nerve to describe this as a complete world! *There is nothing in the box at all to describe the world of Tékumel!*

It was, I thought, a tragedy. The whole reason that Tékumel has been so successful has been because of the love and devotion that has gone into the world. The whole idea of a new rule system is ill conceived, especially when it’s just a rehash of one that most players have already discarded. What gamers want is more background—another Ebon Bindings or another Deeds of the Ever-Glorious, tales of great Wizards and far-off lands. Gardásiyal, I’m afraid, is just an expensive mistake.

Gardásiyal costs \$44 (or \$152.75 if you already have enough toilet tissue and need just the bare minimum rules required to run a scenario—allegedly) plus postage and is published by *Theatre of the Mind* Enterprises Inc., The Byrne Building, Lincoln & Morgan Streets , Phoenixville, PA 19460., USA.