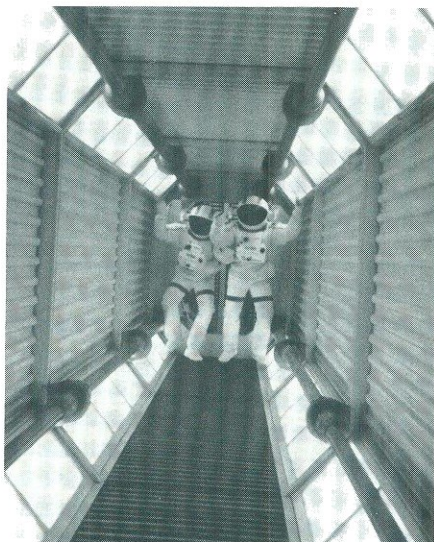


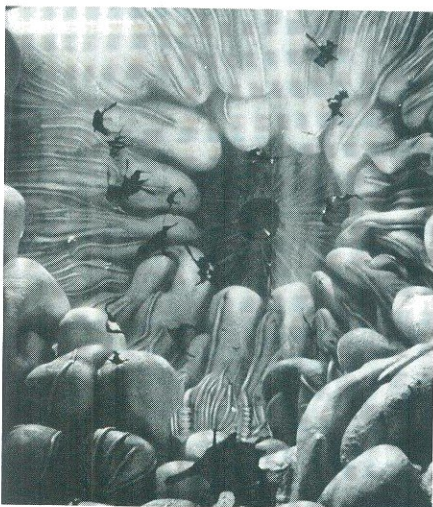
dozen in the movies of 1985.

I'm not criticising all of the pictures I've listed above. Some of them were solid, professional entertainment. *Back to the Future* was a lesson in tight plotting involving clever reversals and characters who were sympathetic without being nauseatingly cute. Despite its 1950s clichés and dubious macho ethic, it was a hard movie not to enjoy. I also



from *Lifeforce*, a Tri-Star Production, © 1985

admired *Return of the Living Dead* because, even with its pulp origins and low budget, it showed some intelligence and imagination, and it was plugged into modern consciousness. A ghoulish movie featuring punks with mohawk haircuts? Paramedics called in to check the vital signs of zombies? Well, why not?



from *Lifeforce*, a Tri-Star Production, © 1985

Most of the other films on that list, though, were exploitation in the old tradition—teenage exploitation, working variations on ancient themes. My *Science Project*, for instance, was a remake of *Animal House*, plus some half-baked science, minus the authentic teenage anarchy that made the earlier movie so much fun. Likewise, *Explorers* followed a formula, the only difference being that

Star Trek Gaming Material

This adventure can be played by characters drawn from the crew of the U.S.S. *Enterprise*, or any other Federation vessel; since all personnel will be given a temporary assignment to a new ship for the duration of this special mission anyway, the ship or ships the characters come from matters little. Although designed with the beginning Gamemaster and player in mind, the adventure can be made more complex if experienced gamers so desire. It is suitable for one-session play (allow much of an afternoon or evening) or for incorporation into a continuing campaign. Gamemasters who own FASA Corporation's *Triangle Campaign* booklet may wish to integrate this mission with "A Family Affair," one of the campaigns in that book.

Beginning the Adventure

While at Starbase 10 for extensive refitting and repair after their last mission, ship's officers receive a short, concise order from the base commander requesting them to meet in Conference Room 7 of the Starbase Administration Center at 0930 the next morning.

Commodore Konstantine Spiravos is a young officer for his rank and post, with a reputation for bold action and imaginative planning; he won a citation for gallantry when he took temporary command of a squadron engaged in a skirmish along the Klingon Neutral Zone following the wounding of the squadron's commanding Rear Admiral, and outmaneuvered a superior force of Klingon ships. That victory led to his promotion to command of Starbase 10. "The Red Fox," as he is sometimes called (a reference to his reddish hair), is

The Commodore doesn't wait for comments. He touches a control on the table, bringing up a holographic image above the center of the table. "What you men are about to hear is to be kept to yourselves, whether you accept the mission or not. This information hasn't yet been released, and we don't intend to let it be released until corrective action is taken." He gestures at the image, now clearly that of a Federation starship. "The U.S.S. *Devon*, a cruiser of the *Brenton* class, was assigned to patrol the Triangle frontier three months ago, together with three smaller ships. Her primary task, aside from routine patrol duties, was to put a stop to pirate activities being mounted by a group of Orion raiders based in the Orion Frontier Mercantile Association worlds. Time and again these raiders have disrupted important shipping, and there are a few Orion families that have been getting rich from "protection money" our merchants have been persuaded to pay for safe access through the Triangle worlds. The merchants screamed at Starfleet, Starfleet screamed at me, and I put the job onto Captain Travis and the *Devon*." The Commodore's face clouds with grief. "It was the wrong thing to do."

"Forty-one days ago, gentlemen, *Devon* and her consorts were summoned to the aid of a convoy under attack. Typical Orion job—a couple of fast blockade runners were making high-speed attack runs; they had taken out the convoy escort before it even had a chance to get shields up. When *Devon* appeared on the scene, the two ships ran in different directions, so Travis had to split his forces. He left a couple of ships to watch the convoy, sent a destroyer after one of the raiders, and took *Devon* after the other. Bad move—he should have held the cruiser back. But two months chasing shadows out in the Triangle, with all the pressure we were put-

by

J. Andrew Keith

ORION

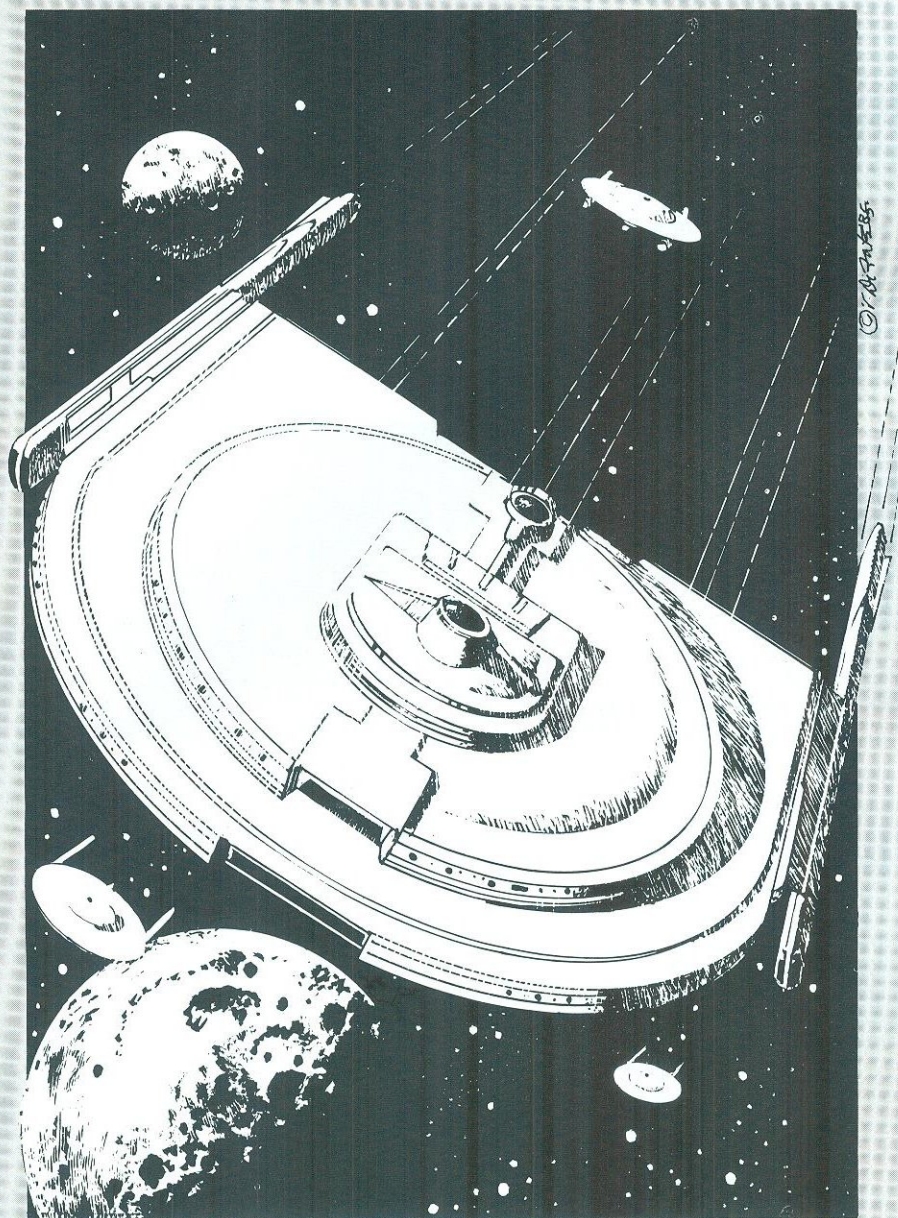
one officer who knows how to take risks.

Commodore Spiravos and another officer, a Lieutenant Commander who walks with a noticeable limp, arrive in the Conference Room shortly after the characters have gathered there. Spiravos moves to the head of the table, and the other man takes a seat to his right.

"Gentlemen," Spiravos says quietly, "I'll not mince words. I need volunteers for a dangerous job, one the analysts downstairs give no more than a 40 percent chance of success to. But if it doesn't get done, the consequences could be bad. Very bad."

ting on him from this end... well, I probably would have done the same myself."

The holographic image shifts to a planetary system map. "The battle wasn't far from Workday, one of the Orion Triangle worlds. The raider headed that way... and, as you can see, Workday has quite a band of asteroids in the orbit just beyond the planet's. That runner took off through a dense swarm, and *Devon* followed, but the Orions must have had the swarm mapped in advance. They got through scot-free. *Devon* hit a planetoid fragment and lost one of the warp nacelles, plus



RISING

illustrated by
Vincent Di Fate

taking a lot of other damage to power and life support."

Spiravos glances at the Lieutenant Commander. "Lt. Commander DuPont, here, was in the Engineering department on *Devon*. He received orders to try to get clear in one of the cruiser's shuttles; there wasn't a chance of getting a message through otherwise. Travis had no choice to save his crew but to surrender to the Orions—there wasn't a prayer of putting up a fight."

DuPont nods. "They missed my shuttle in among the debris and the planetoids, and I was able to follow a lot of what

happened through sensors and radio. Half-a-dozen ships came from Workday to take *Devon* in tow. The signals I intercepted made it pretty clear that they have enough spacedock facilities around Workday to repair the cruiser. And they have every intention of doing so."

"Can you imagine how much more damage those pirates could cause with a cruiser like the *Devon* as part of their fleet?" the Commodore asked. "We don't have enough large ships in this quadrant to guard against a problem like that. You all remember what happened when that madman Khan seized the *Reliant*; well,

SF Cinema...

this was the Spielberg formula, featuring suburban kids straight out of E. T. Director Joe Dante kept his creativity rigidly in check until the final ten minutes, which provided the same sort of relief as a loud fart at the end of a church service.

Other movies followed formulas from their own pasts. *Mad Max Beyond the Thunderdome* moved the Road Warrior scenario a few more years into the future, and showed us the more frighteningly vivid post-apocalyptic wasteland ever created on film. Unfortunately, it takes more than an environment to make a movie, and this third *Mad Max* saga never developed sufficient identity to pull it out of the shadow of its predecessor.

2010 was another sequel that provoked disappointment, because it backed away from the boldness of the original and became just another space adventure, with flashing colored lights playing on faces of actors trying to pretend they really were in a spaceship someplace.

Lastly, *Lifeforce* attempted to appeal to a wide audience, but was punishingly unpleasant to watch, and stole from a dozen other movies, ranging from *Alien* to *The Exorcist*.

The second lesson I draw, then, is that science fiction cinema of 1985 was mostly stuck in some sort of predictable mold. There was very little innovation. By September, I felt a distinct sense of déjà-vu; by October, there was a definite feeling of monotony; and by November, who really wanted to see another science fiction movie, even if (as was the case with late-comer *Teen Wolf*) it had some amusing moments?

Now, any time a category begins to get bogged down in its own clichés, this is indeed a Bad Sign. Hollywood, of course, tends to be insensitive to such subtle artistic nuances; but Hollywood is definitely sensitive to money, and with a couple exceptions, the summer science fiction movies didn't do as well as had been expected. If you factor in the fantastic success of *Rambo* and its various imitators (such as *Invasion U.S.A.*, which, I put it to you, was not just stupid but *offensively* stupid), you reach an unavoidable conclusion: from the Hollywood perspective, science fiction is on the way out, and heroic male adventure is on the way in. When they're planning their new exploitation movies, they won't do one about some marauding alien blob, they'll do one about a marauding Vietnam vet.

Well, will it be such a bad thing if the summer of 1986 is relatively empty of science fiction compared with the summer of 1985? If we take science fiction seriously (as I do myself), do we really care if the exploitation moviemakers pick on some other category for their cheap thrills? Indeed, I get as irritable as anyone, watching a cocaine-addled, half-baked, rehearsed 1950s science fic-

SF Cinema...

tion concept reduced to teenage-moron format. On the other hand, if, as I suspect, science fiction soon becomes synonymous with "bad box office" in the minds of producers, we'll see a shortage not only of the dumb films but also of the smart ones. In other words, if the mood turns against movies like *Weird Science*, it turns against movies like *Back to the Future* too, because the people who don't really understand or care for science fiction see them as being all much the same sort of thing.

"Freshness and difference are really what wake up an audience." This from Dan O'Bannon, writer of *Alien*, director of *Return of the Living Dead*, interviewed in *Cinefantastique*. And, of course, he's right; to some extent, we can be lured to the movies by a film that has something familiar in it; but once we're in the theater, we need some surprises. Alas, O'Bannon also says: "No producer in Hollywood seems to believe this."

In fact, Hollywood avoids surprises, and prefers to follow fashion. To take just one example: *Time Bandits* was a movie that had a lot of problems getting funded, because it featured a bunch of midgets, and a previous "midget movie" titled *Under the Rainbow* had done very badly. Never mind that *Rainbow* was a witless comedy using midgets tastelessly as objects of fun, while *Time Bandits* was an imaginative tour-de-force in an entirely different category. So far as Hollywood was concerned, midgets were bad box office, and that was that. (Fortunately, George Harrison came through with the necessary money; otherwise *Time Bandits* might never have been made.)

Personally, I believe that the fashion for science fiction cinema is indeed waning, but the form could easily be revitalized. We simply need some O'Bannonesque "freshness and difference." We need some movies that aren't about teenage geniuses; some cinema that dares to deviate from the predictable formats.

There are a few unknowns currently pending, such as Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (not yet released at the time of writing) and the upcoming *Invaders from Mars* (scripted by O'Bannon). The science fiction movie field could yet be reborn.

I doubt it will happen, however. History tells us that when a category becomes over-exploited, the exploiters keep working the same old formulas till death by over-exposure is certain beyond doubt; and then they simply pick up and move on someplace else, leaving just a few low-level operators (such as Corman) who continue doing more or less what they always used to do, before the Big Boom ever got started. This is exactly what happened in the horror genre, and I expect to see it in science fiction cinema, by 1987 if not by 1986. ★

Orion Rising...

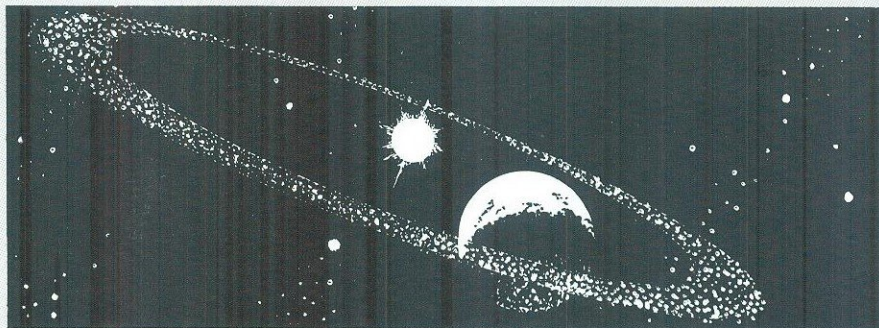
Devon's a combat ship, not a research cruiser, and I shudder to think how much damage she could do to our shipping lanes."

The Commodore leaned forward in his chair. "Diplomacy isn't likely to work; the Orions on Workday have too many trumps, including Captain Travis and his people. By the time the diplomats agree on the shape of the conference table, that cruiser will be loose. Nor can we try a straight military solution... move a fleet into that part of the Triangle, or threaten

choice. Konstantine Spiravos also has a reputation for getting his own way, and he's not above assigning their ship to the worst duty in the Quadrant as an inducement to win the "willing" cooperation of these "volunteers."

The Mission Begins

The characters (plus non-player characters [NPCs] or secondary player characters to make the total crew of twelve needed for the ship's complement) are joined by two additional NPCs. One is Lt. Commander DuPont, sent because of his familiarity with the cruiser's Engineer-



Orion "neutrality," and every Klingon from here to Organia will want to get in on it. We can't afford that. But there's a third course, and it's the one I've decided to try. I want you men to carry it out... if you feel you want to volunteer. It could easily end up being a one-way mission."

The image over the table changes again, this time to a view of a sleek, small starship with unfamiliar lines. "This is the *Ash-eakadh*, an Orion blockade runner. It surrendered to the destroyer Travis sent after it during the convoy battle. Neither the ship nor the crew can give us any leverage; the family that owns it was only cooperating with the bunch that took the *Devon* on a temporary basis. But she's ours now, and the Orions don't know that.

"What we... what I want to do is present our Orion friends with a *fait accompli* before diplomats, Klingons, or anything else can muck things up. If a small group could get to that spacedock where *Devon* is being refitted in a Trojan horse like this one, we'd have a chance to sabotage the cruiser and make sure she'll never fly again. It will all be over before anyone can respond, and we're pretty sure that the crisis will evaporate nicely once it's done. But I'm sure all you gentlemen can see the risks of such a plan." The Commodore settles back. "It's an all-volunteer mission. I won't force anyone to go. But I need you, and I promise your efforts will not go unrewarded."

The decision to accept or decline the mission is, of course, up to the players. Hesitation, though, is likely to lead to some hints from "The Red Fox" that, volunteer mission or no, there are ways the group can be made to regret the wrong

ing section. The other is an Orion trader named Ruzheer, who has agreed to cooperate with Starfleet in exchange for a full pardon for both himself and his son on piracy and slavery charges. These two are not considered part of the crew complement; Ruzheer, in particular is to be closely watched against the chance that he values his son's freedom less than his own chance at treachery against the group. Ruzheer is important, though, in that he knows the Workday system, speaks the Orion tongue, and can generally add verisimilitude to the Federation deception.

The voyage to Workday takes just over 22 days at Warp 8, and is uneventful. It is only after the captured privateer enters the system that the adventure really begins.

As the ship enters the star system, it becomes clear that only a handful of Orion ships are currently in port. Only one privateer of any size (the ship which lured *Devon* to her fate) is present, along with a handful of trading ships (but of course Orion traders are often just pirates waiting for a place to plunder, so these four vessels could also be of some importance in a crisis).

Devon is currently in an orbital docking facility, essentially similar to the work dock used on the *Enterprise* for her refits prior to the V-ger and Khan incidents. This dock is powered and fully shielded, protecting *Devon* from a long-range run by anything short of a heavy cruiser. The shields also prevent transporter contact.

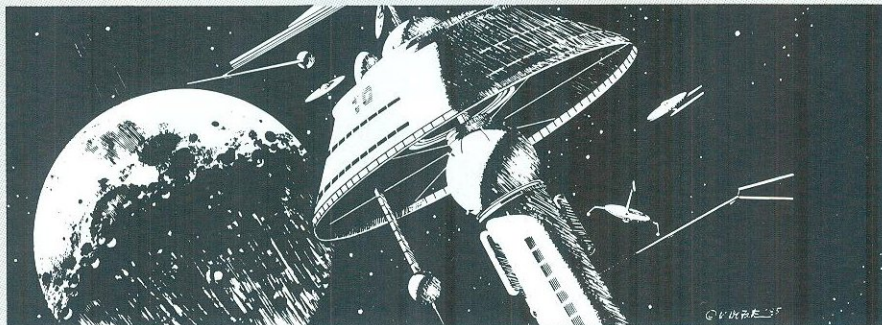
It is thus necessary for the group to find a good excuse to bring their ship right into the docking area, not inside the actual grid surrounding the cruiser, but at least within the area covered by the dock's shields. This, as an Orion starport communications

officer is quick to point out, is highly irregular. A good, plausible lie is in order, and it is up to the players to come up with one. Ruzheer is no help in this, claiming (perhaps truthfully) ignorance of local operations procedures for the refit dock portion of Workday starport.

If the players are completely stumped, DuPont can suggest any of several alternatives—the ship has crucial supplies for the dock, and orders to deliver them directly there; or the ship is badly damaged and needs to tie into dockside power sources so the warp generators can be taken off

12 strong at the dock administrative office, and these can shift anywhere via transporter if an alarm is raised, but they are not an immediate factor in the situation.

Beaming aboard the *Devon*, the characters have two essential tasks. They must reach the cruiser's bridge in order to power up the ship's one remaining warp engine, while at the same time another party reaches the Jeffries Tube leading to the intact warp nacelle and reroutes the circuitry there to cause an imbalance in the magnetic bottle that harnesses the antimatter in the ship's engine. Power must be



line; or perhaps the ship can be claimed to be carrying a highly prominent Orion leader come to inspect this important prize (especially effective if the adventure is run as a tie-in to "A Family Affair" from *The Triangle Campaign*). Give them time, however to come up with a plausible explanation of their own. The response made of the Orion traffic controller should be based upon the story they give; when in doubt, roll LUC or less of the character who suggested the story to have it be accepted.

If there is trouble at this stage, the group basically faces two options: either back off and look for another opening, or get stubborn. In the former case, patience should be rewarded by some other opportunity to get in close to *Devon*, such as by way of a regularly scheduled shuttle flight which passes within transporter range of where the party has been forced to take up orbit. Stubborn attempts to force a change and get past the shields right away should be dependent upon LUC, with failure leading to a confrontation and success to permission to approach the dock.

Hopefully, though, the group will get the permission they need without a lot of trouble. In this case, the ship comes in alongside the spidery frame of the dock, and inside the shields, ready for the next step in the plan.

Aboard the Devon

Security on and around the *Devon* is light. There is a workforce quartered on board, and other workers swarming around the hull almost constantly, preparing for the attachment of a new warp nacelle, but the Orions are not expecting real trouble, and so have no actual guards or troops on hand. There is a detachment,

up and running for this, after which the sabotage can be attempted (roll against warp drive technology skill) once per turn thereafter. Only after the imbalance has been created can the party on the Bridge follow through by destroying the master engineering console, thus making it impossible to reverse the process.

As can be seen, the mission will require the group to separate into two parties (plus anyone left on the privateer, usually NPCs) and resolve their actions simultaneously. Pace it like a TV or movie episode, cutting from one to the other periodically, and keep both groups interested in events. One party should *not* be allowed to know the other group's situation, unless a communicator is brought into play.

Complications

Though the mission is perfectly straightforward, there are some problems that might be encountered. These can make the group's task that much harder to complete.

Every turn, *each* party has a 30 percent chance of encountering Orion technicians at work. Technicians are not armed, per se, but may attack using tools as clubs if they achieve surprise. Technicians will also do their best to reach an intercom panel and sound an alarm; 1D10 turns later, the security detail will arrive by transporter, and these men *are* armed.

In addition to this difficulty, players may have to contend with trouble from Lt. Commander DuPont. DuPont has been suppressing part of the truth regarding what happened aboard *Devon*. His wife, Lieutenant Mirriam DuPont, was also on board; broadcasts he overheard as he made his escape indicated that she

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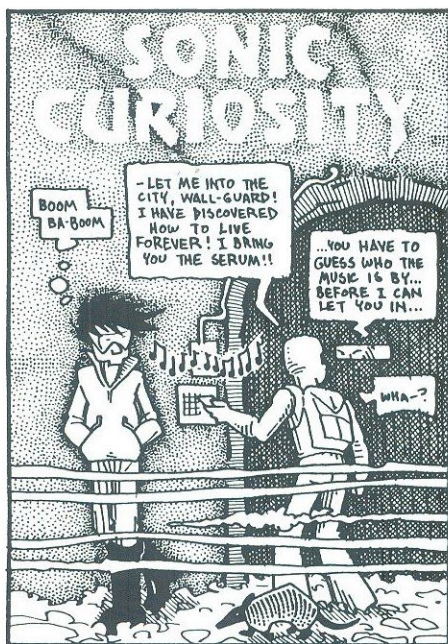
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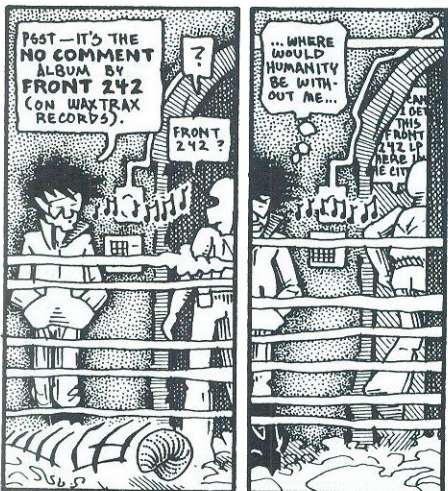
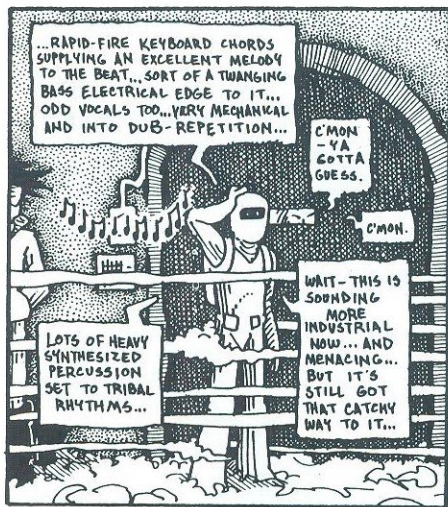
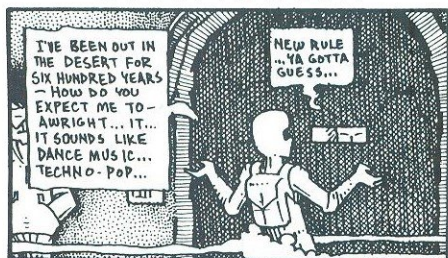
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Orion Rising...

attempted to resist the boarding party placed on the ship after Travis surrendered, and was killed. DuPont wants revenge, and is apt to go to almost any length to get it.

Likely actions DuPont may take include jumping Orion personnel who might ordinarily have passed on by, or hatching some harebrained scheme to use *Devon* to ram the Orion privateer that captured her. In almost any event, DuPont will refuse to leave the Engineering section of the cruiser when the rest are going, preferring to commit suicide with the ship. He will, if necessary, use weapons to enforce his decision on the others.

Escape

Once the imbalance situation is set up, the group has at least five minutes (30 turns) to get off the cruiser and clear of the dock before the matter and antimatter react and explode. After 30 turns have passed, roll 1D100 once per turn thereafter; there is a 25 percent chance of the cruiser's blowing up. If for any reason the cruiser uses weapons or attempts to move, the explosion follows at once.

If the alarm hasn't been raised by now, the sudden departure of the group's privateer will certainly cause some comment. Demands that the ship heave to are apt to be ignored (it's going to be a big explosion when it comes), so the Orions may well mount a pursuit.

This allows the Gamemaster to inject a battle as the climax of the adventure. Ship stats are provided for use with the Star Trek III Combat Simulator; the group must manage to break off the action and win free. If they find themselves unable to stop the Orions (and this could easily be the case), fate may take a hand. DuPont, stay-

ing behind on the *Devon*, may see the crisis unfolding and take action. One phaser blast is all he can get off before the power surge destroys the ship, but that one should take the Orions by surprise and cripple the one ship capable of pursuit at high warp speeds.

Other battle considerations should be left to the Gamemaster to arrange.

Characters

Below are presented character statistics for the two major NPCs, and for "typical" Orion guards and technicians appearing in the adventure. Personality notes are included where appropriate for better role-play by the Gamemaster.

Name: Alain DuPont

Current Assignment: detached from U.S.S. *Devon*.

Position: Lt. Commander, Engineering

Race: Human

Age: 33

Sex: Male

Attributes:

STR—52, CHA—70

END—65, LUC—62

INT—73, PSI—05

DEX—67

Combat Statistics:

To-Hit Numbers

Modern: 63

HTH: 34

Bare-Handed Damage: 1D10 + 3

AP: 10

Significant Skills:

Warp Drive Technology—67

Mechanical Engineering—53

Starship Weaponry Technology—65

Starship Weaponry Operation—30

Marksmanship, Modern Weapon—48

Manner: A moody, withdrawn man, very grim and utterly determined to carry



out the mission. From time to time, characters may see him studying a small locket that contains a stereoview of a young woman in Starfleet Uniform, his dead wife, Mirriam.

Name: Akhid Ruzheer

Current Assignment: Federation prisoner
Race: Orion
Age: 53
Sex: Male
Attributes:

STR—63, CHA—71
END—65, LUC—32
INT—58, PSI—23
DEX—61

Bare-Hand Damage: 1D10 + 6
AP: 10

Significant Skills:
Language (Orion)—48
Space Sciences (Astrogation)—65
Marksmanship, Modern Weapon—58
Negotiations/Diplomacy—80
Unarmed Personal Combat—33
Leadership—65
Streetwise—71

Manner: Ruzheer is outgoing, jovial, and evidently completely willing to cooperate. In fact, he is completely willing, but his heartiness and bonhomie may seem suspicious and cause players to suspect him of devious plots against them.

Name: Typical Orion Technician

Race: Orion

Sex: Male

Attributes:

STR—51, CHA—63
END—60, LUC—40
INT—64, PSI—15
DEX—56

Combat Statistics:
To-Hit Numbers

Modern: 59
HTH: 47
Combat Statistics:
To-Hit Numbers
Modern: 28
HTH: 28
Bare-Hand Damage: 1D10 + 3
AP: 9
Significant Skills:
None of importance to the adventure.

Name: Typical Orion Security Guard

Race: Orion

Sex: Male

Attributes:

STR—65, CHA—59
END—59, LUC—30
INT—55, PSI—15
DEX—68

Combat Statistics:
To-Hit Numbers:

Modern: 62
HTH: 60

Bare-Hand Damage: 1D10 + 8
AP: 10

Significant Skills:
Security Procedures—65
Small Unit Tactics—48
Marksmanship, Modern—56
Personal Combat, Unarmed—52

Starships

If Gamemasters find it necessary to play out any space battles, rules and stats for the *Brenton* class and some Orion vessels can be found in FASA Corporation's *Star Trek III: Starship Combat Game* (Catalog No. 2006, Price: \$15.00).

Ship: *Devon* (Brenton Class Cruiser) ★

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