

d&d3e

Here is an idea for a Murphey's Rule:

Picture: An obvious mage, cleric, and fighter stand bewildered under a giant box trap. The mage says, "I don't see any traps, how about you guys?"

Caption: In D&D 3rd Edition, only rogues can use their Search skill to look for traps.

After playing D&D3e for several weeks now, I can honestly say that I really dislike it. I can see how so many people do like it, but I keep running into little things that make my skin crawl, like the above. I will avoid other rule nits because I do not own the books, my GM is probably misinterpreting or missing rules,¹ and I am attempting to let this be my last rant against this popular game system.²

I look at D&D3e and I look at BESM2. Sure, the latter has its mechanical problems, but it lacks the manipulative artifice of the former. In D&D3e, monks can make a "stunning attack" once per day per level. This is not a supernatural ability, so why is there a limitation to its use? In BESM, you create a Special Attack and use it as much as you want because, dammit, you paid for it.

The multi-class and skill rules are a definite improvement over previous editions. However, there are far too many classes and they all cater to the video-game munchkin mentality. If I can differentiate between two fighters by choosing different skills and feats and I can multi-class seamlessly, why are fighters, barbarians, rangers, and paladins separate classes?

As with Feng Shui, D&D3e gives me a choice of pre-made sandwiches when I want the ingredients to make my own. Frustration develops when you have a little bit of freedom.³ Both D&D3e and Feng Shui give me just enough freedom that I am utterly frustrated by the limitations they force upon me. The frustration kills my sense of wonder faster than a cleric's player saying, "I have two cure lights left."

¹ Is it true that there is no bonus for attacking someone from behind with a missile weapon (and thus flanking does not apply)?

² I fully admit that my desire to rant against D&D3e is fuelled (though not *caused*) by its popularity.

³ To paraphrase Hoffer's *The True Believer*.

In the campaign, I am playing a Lawful Good, Halfling Rogue. Before starting the adventure, he was a sailor and a cook. He is good with knots and knows how to spice up rations, but he does not know how to pick a lock or a pocket or search for traps any more than any fighter or mage. Dammit.

ignorable theme

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religion

Maybe later.

comments

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scott bennie

I would enjoy *Millionaire* if the host (Regis Philbin here in the states) and production (the dramatic music, the false tension, etc.) were not so obnoxious. I think the format is great; it has the tension of classic quiz shows with multiple choice so the rest of us can follow along. However, if I was to ever appear on the show, I am afraid I would punch Regis when he said, "Is that your final answer?"

I agree with you completely about *Mystery Men*. I will have to check out *The Specials*.

patrick brady

Good ideas regarding teamwork and leadership. Social skills only work on NPCs—PCs ignore other PCs no matter how high their persuasion or charm skills—just one of those roleplaying realities. Leadership really only applies when getting NPCs to follow orders. I doubt a teamwork skill would be of any real use except for NPCs. Most character-level activities, unlike squad-level activities, do not require teamwork, and I do not think a dedicated teamwork skill would find much use.

michael cule

I love a good heresy. Please tell your ideas on Slayers, Vampires, and all things in the Buffy-verse.

lee gold

Why cannot something be both a game and a narrative art form? The show *Whose Line is it Anyway?*, Hogshead's *Baron Munchausen*, and Atlas Games' *Once Upon a Time* qualify as both, I think.

rob heinsoo

Your take of D20 CoC illustrates one element that Unknown Armies gets right and CoC gets wrong. In this scenario, with a Deep One approaching, the person who cracks would shoot the Deep One, not himself. In fact, he would probably keep shooting until the trigger breaks.

The best, and most unexpected suicide, in a CoC-ish game was when Matt Helms' priest quietly went into the woods and hanged himself. He did this well after the climax of the adventure and caught the GM completely by surprise.

spike y jones

I really like the idea of having multiple, contrasting descriptions of beasts and the powers they supposedly possess. This could really help create a sense of wonder in GMs.

rene a louviere jr

As the sages say, you cannot please everyone. While fluffy science displeases some, bad science explanations displease others.

Regarding Pluto, bear in mind that it is unlike every other planet in origin, size, etc. You may wish to read this 1999 press release from the International Astronomical Union (IAU):

www.iau.org/IAU/FAQ/PlutoPR.html

Essentially, they have no desire to reclassify Pluto and they have no plans to do so in the future.

Human nature prevents anyone from being one-hundred-percent objective and without expectations. In fact, most experiments have an expected outcome, based on current theories and previous experiments. This is why peer review is so important. When it comes to paranormal phenomena like ESP, can you think of an experiment that would pre-determine a negative result?⁴

You would have probably had fits with the Castle Falkenstein GM who transported *Hamlet* to a Texas oil family. What is your opinion of Kurosawa's *Ran*?

brian misiaszek

Thanks for the distinction between SoW and SoF. Both are important and interrelated, as you say.

mark nemeth

My experience with the D&D3 PH has been horrible. I do not own a copy, so I use other players'

⁴ Without cheating; that is, without falsifying results or breaking the double-blind barrier.

copies. I can never find anything quickly. The art is good, but the artsy-bits scattered all over the place are distracting. Just to be fair, I have problems with the BESM2 layout as well; mainly in the way they split normal and special attributes and defects.

lisa padol

Patrick had always expected Matt to muck up the Meg-Bruce relationship. Bruce expected Meg to eventually leave him. Theirs was a relationship of convenience and not very deep emotionally, or that is how I saw it. Given Bruce's issues with commitment (to anything in his life), he expected Meg to get bored with the relationship. Had Matt not fast-forwarded time between the end of the first campaign and start of the second, I would have expected the relationship to fizzle out when they realized they had nothing in common.

The first two games at DunDraCon were enjoyable because of the humor—either intentional or out-of-character. The third was enjoyable for me because of the dramatic tension between specific characters; other players, not involved in the subplot, would give different reasons, I imagine.

Most convention game descriptions just state the premise (“Strange things are afoot at the ole’ mine”) and tend to be fairly accurate. Many descriptions do not accurately state the style of the game—whether it is a hack-fest dungeon crawl, a cerebral mystery, or a light-hearted romp, for instance. Too often, the problem lies in the gap between what the GM did not describe and what the player(s) assumed. This probably does not answer your question.

When I watched the alternate version of *Chimes of Big Ben*, I only noticed a different soundtrack and low-quality film. Any differences in plot or dialogue were too insignificant to worry about—to me, at least.

brian rogers

Call me a heretic or a boring fuddy-duddy with no sense of humor, but I do not find KoDT funny. I might smile or smirk occasionally, but never guffaw, laugh, or even chuckle. Some people read KoDT and think, “I know guys just like this!” I think, “I know guys like this—I don’t like them.” Even worse, I have recently stopped buying Dork Tower as well.

Your multiple encounters with the same D&D troll is a great tale. Sounds like a good way to start an article on how to run D&D monsters in a traditional (which is non-traditional for rpgs) way.