

Review Review

SPI on AD&D®

Gary Gygax

A recent review of *ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® PLAYERS HANDBOOK* in SPI's house organ, *STRATEGY & TACTICS* demonstrated that the reviewer, Richard Berg, does not play *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®*. This handicap prevented him from intelligently contrasting and comparing the old game-form with the new, and it proved to be a fatal drawback in terms of the value of the statements Mr. Berg made. Pontificating from his lofty height, the reviewer boldly asserted that *PLAYERS HANDBOOK* was not a game design but merely a simple rewriting of what had already been given in the original *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*. Claiming that the majority of the work was "pig's lips" or some such, Mr. Berg went on to point out that he felt sure that dedicated *D&D* players would find the work useful and valuable anyway.

Of course, an antique set of ivory chessmen will be appreciated only by the chess *aficionado*. Dabblers will be satisfied with a lesser offering, and those who are not devotees of the game will find the cost outrageous, unless they also happen to appreciate works of art. The analogy could be better, but when one considers the success of *AD&D* in general, and *PLAYERS HANDBOOK* in particular, there are obviously quite a number of those dedicated players who disagree with the learned Mr. Berg's assessment. Reaction from players has been uniformly favorable. Workmanship in *AD&D* is far superior to that of its predecessor. The analogy is poor only when cost is considered. *AD&D*, when it is

complete in its projected form, will by no means be as costly as an antique ivory chess set . . . Under the circumstances, one can only wonder why Mr. Berg took the time to write on a subject of which he obviously knew so little. Perhaps it is personal or professional jealousy, as the success of *D&D* and now *AD&D* has certainly set the rest of the gaming hobby industry on its collective ear, but that is speculation.

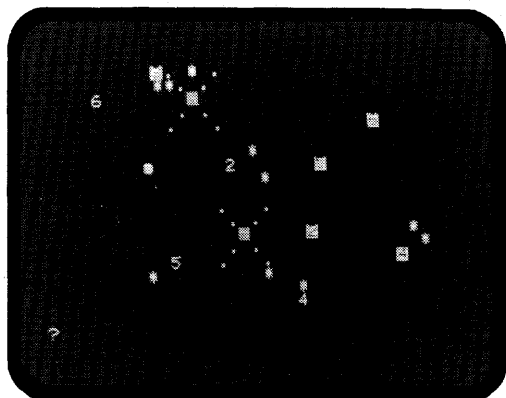
What is worthy of comment, however, is the source of the critical commentary on *AD&D* being nothing more than a rewrite of *D&D*. Coming from an officer of SPI, the past masters of the rehash, artisans of the warmed-over WWII battle game, purveyors of the umpteenth version of the same, tired scenario, it is indeed a wonder that Mr. Berg would bring up such a spectre! In my view, however, this is not a case of the pot calling the kettle black, but rather a case of the pot complaining because its besooted vision causes it to imagine it detects a spot of tarnish on the silver salver above it. Then again, perhaps it stems from the fact that SPI's best fantasy adventure game to date, despite extensive advertising and hype, despite riding the coattails of J.R.R. Tolkien, comes nowhere near the sales record of *PLAYERS HANDBOOK*, and Mr. Berg has never himself authored or designed a game half so popular as *D&D/AD&D*. Draw your own conclusions, dear reader. And, Richard, the ball is back in your court.

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