




EDITORIAL PAGE
☺

"M" 

ay you live in interesting times" might not *really* be an ancient Chinese curse, but it's a good description of the state of Interregnum and the roleplaying hobby these days. Particularly the hobby. Do these things come in cycles?

The Factsheet 5 Fiasco

I mailed a copy of Interregnum #1 to a magazine called Factsheet 5 several months ago. Factsheet 5 is a review magazine, covering the world of amateur publishing; they were mentioned in an article on 'zines in a recent issue of Rolling Stone. It seemed a good way to get out the word about IR.

When the review finally came out in issue #52 of Factsheet 5 I was surprised to see that it was written by the chief editor, rather than the science-fiction writer on the F5 staff. I was even more surprised to see that the review was bad. Very bad. In fact, it couldn't have been much worse. The strangest thing was that the reviewer didn't seem to be talking about Interregnum—it was almost as if he hadn't read it at all. Here's the review:

"Interregnum: A new APA focusing on SF and RPGs. 10 contributors in this premier issue. Most just talking about their background and gaming experiences. It appears that all of the contributors are on the Net so they talk about many of the things they've found there." (pp. 87, Science Fiction section of Factsheet 5 #52)

Let me put this in perspective: most zines were very positively reviewed. A search so far has revealed not one other zine about which some complimentary thing was not said, out of hundreds of reviews. The other magazines in the science fiction/RPG section (which included a number of prozines) were, for the most part, lavishly praised. However, IR was one of only two magazines in that section that had been reviewed by the chief editor rather than the science-fiction editor. He praised the other RPG zine for giving tips on "the hot new game Gathering the Magic (sic)"—the chief editor obviously knows nothing at all about gaming.


Adding insult to injury, the editor wrote in the beginning of F5: "How do you know what's good? Check the length of the review. In general, the more we say about a zine the more we like it."

The review of Interregnum was one of the shortest in the issue. After several re-readings it seemed to me that the review *had* to have been written without more than a one-minute scan of Interregnum at best; factually, it was just plain wrong. Even though writers introduced themselves in IR #1, my rigorous count turned up 42 pages of original (non-"background and gaming experiences") material out of 57 total zine pages. And the Net is, after all, not a topic of discussion in IR.

I was pretty annoyed, so I wrote to the F5 science fiction reviewer and suggested that IR hadn't actually been read; I'd live with a bad review, but at least it could have been skimmed in greater detail. If they were going to fake a review, let them do a better job of it!

The science fiction reviewer responded promptly. He had been too busy to read all the SF zines for that issue, and so had passed on a few to the chief editor for review. However, he informed me, the chief editor didn't generally read the material he reviewed. Yes, Interregnum had just been quickly skimmed.

Wonderful. We were nationally slammed by an idiot who wrote the review the way I used to write book reports in grade school: by skimming a page or two and making up everything else out of whole cloth.

I'll be sending more copies of IR to the science fiction reviewer. Hopefully we'll get a better review, or at least a fair one in the next issue of E5. All in all, the review isn't really that much of a problem; it doesn't seem likely that that many gamers read Factsheet 5. But I must say that I was very surprised to discover such shoddy and unprofessional journalism in a nationally distributed magazine. 


The First *Interregnum* Sampler

With this issue, we reach our half-year mark. It seems only appropriate to think of future expansion. Actually, it *always* seems appropriate to think of expansion. ☺


One good way to increase circulation could be to distribute promotional material at conventions. I'm working on a new flier for IR; it should be enclosed in the next issue (and while I'm on the subject, if anyone would like to suggest text for the flier I'm all ears...). However, I'd like to distribute something a little more solid; something to give new readers a real introduction to the magazine.

Therefore, I'd like to make up an Interregnum sampler. This would be a slim special issue featuring some of the most interesting and notable material to appear in IR, along with (perhaps) some special material written just for that issue. A large number of copies will be run off and stored; as time goes by they will be distributed to various conventions. New samplers will be made up, perhaps at yearly intervals.

The sampler won't be available at the usual promotional sites at all. It will be available only to subscribers and at conventions. Possibly a specially bound copy will be available to contributors.

What's needed is for writers to decide which of their works they'd like to include in the sampler. Of course no one need participate if they don't want to! I'd also be interested in the feedback of the readership. Which articles are your favorites? Drop me a line and let me know what you'd like to see. 

An Electronic *Interregnum*

I've spoken of this before, but it seems to be a good time to take some action. While monthly distribution of an electronic version of IR is probably more work than I can handle, an Interregnum sampler on the Internet would probably be a good idea. Again, I'll need the help of contributors on this: the best thing to do would be to pick out a piece or two and email them to me. I'll take care of the formatting. Unfortunately it's beyond my capabilities to encode a document containing artwork, and in any case such a document would be incredibly huge. Therefore, the electronic file will be in ASCII form, with (alas!) no art. Unless any techno-wizards out there would care to help... 

Until next month!

—>Pete